Characters

- CURT, 29 *years old*
- RICH, 28 *years old*
- PANDORA, 22 *years old. Curt's wife*
- ART, 23 *years old*
- MAMMA TOO TIGHT, 20 *years old*
- SHAKY, 36 *years old. Mama Too Tight's man*
- PIANO PLAYER
- BASS PLAYER
- DRUMMER
- BARTENDER
- DEENY
- BOUNCER
- CUSTOMERS
- SHOWGIRL
- VOICE

Act 1

Act 1, Scene 1

This play is about some Black people: CURT, PANDORA, ART, RICH *and* SHAKY, *though* MAMMA TOO TIGHT *is white. The remainder of the cast is interracial, but two of the musicians are Black and if* DEENY, *the* BOUNCER *and one of the customers are white, there might be added tensions. But it is left to the director's imagination to match the colors to the portrayals.*

TIME: *Early 1960's late evening in January.*

SCENE: *A court apartment in Los Angeles in the West Adams district. The room is done in white: white ceiling, white walls, white overly elaborate furniture, but a red wall-to-wall carpet covers the floor. A wall bed is raised. Upstage, two doorless entrances stand on each side of the head of the bed. The right entrance is to the kitchen; the backstage area that represents the kitchen is shielded by a filmy curtain and the actors' dim silhouettes are seen when the area is lighted. The left entrance will be raised and offstage right at the head of a short flight of stairs and a platform which leads into the combination bathroom-dressing room-closet. When the actors are within this area their shadows will be cast upon the wall fronting the stairs. And when the bed is lowered a scarlet spread is shown.*

Within the interior of the front room the light is a mixture of red, blues, and violet with crimson shadows bordering the edges of the stage to create the illusion of a world afire with this pocket of atmosphere an oasis.

A Telefunken, turned very low, plays the local jazz station, and CURT *and* RICH *lean over a chess board.* CURT *squats upon a stool, and facing him across the coffee table and chess board*, RICH, *a stocky brooding man, studies his next move, seated on the edge of the couch. Each has an empty beer bottle and a glass close at hand.*

CURT

I just about have you up tight, Rich.

RICH

(annoyed)

Awww . . . Curt, man . . . don't try and hustle me!

CURT

(looks at him)

Did I say somethin' to upset you, man?

(RICH *shakes his head and curses to himself. A shadow appears at head of stairs and pauses as if the figure is listening for conversation, then* PANDORA *enters, a beautiful Black girl wearing tight white pants, a crimson blouse and black boots, and slowly descends the stairs while looking at the men. She crosses behind them and walks toward the kitchen.* RICH *looks a second at her behind, but drops his gaze when* CURT *begins tapping the chess board with a fingernail.* CURT *gives no discernible attention to* PANDORA. *She enters the kitchen; a light goes on.* CURT *stares at* RICH)

This game's somethin' else . . . man.

RICH

(studies board, looks up at CURT *and concentrates upon the board again. Mutters to himself)*

Ain't this somethin' else, though . . .

(looking up)

You almost got my ass, man.

CURT

(mocking)

I have got your ass, Rich.

RICH

(half-hearted)

Awww . . . man . . . why don't you go fuck yourself?

(he places hand upon a piece)

CURT

(warning and placing hand upon one of his pieces)

Wouldn't do that if I were you, good buddy.

RICH

(frowns and takes hand from board; he shakes head and mumbles, then curses his own caution)

Sheeet!

(he makes move)

Lets see what you're goin' ta do with that, man!

CURT

(deliberately)

Checkmate!

RICH

(half-rising)

What you say, Curt?

CURT

(toneless)

Checkmate, man.

(CURT *looks toward the rear of the apartment; the faucet has been turned on, and in the kitchen* PANDORA *leisurely crosses the entrance doorway)*

WE'RE READY FOR ANOTHER ONE, PANDORA!

PANDORA

(off)

Already!

CURT

That's what I said, baby!

PANDORA

(re-crosses doorway)

Okay.

RICH

(mumbles and studies chess board)

Well . . . I'll be goddamned.

(faucet sound goes off)

PANDORA

(off)

You don't need fresh glasses, do ya?

(sound of refrigerator opening)

CURT

(surly)

NO, PANDORA, JUST THE BEER!

PANDORA

(raising voice)

Okay . . . Okay . . . wait a fuckin' minute, will ya? Be right there!

(rattles of bottles)

CURT

(glowering toward the kitchen, then staring at RICH *who sits stoop-shouldered)*

How 'bout another one, Rich?

RICH

(reaches into pocket and brings out a small roll and pulls off two bills and places them beside CURT' *s glass. He mutters to himself)*

I wonder why in the fuck I didn't see that?

PANDORA

(with a cross expression enters carrying two bottles of Miller's Highlife)

Just because you're pissed off at the world, don't take it out on me! What'ta hell ya think ya got 'round here, maid service?

(CURT *stands to meet her; she slows. Whining*)

Awww . . . CURT . . .

(a knock comes from backstage; relieved she looks at CURT)

I wonder who would be knocking at the kitchen door, honey?

CURT

(reaches down, palms and pockets the money)

There's only one way to be sure, sugar.

(sits down, looks at RICH)

You clean, man?

RICH

(nods)

Yeah . . Curt.

CURT

(nods to PANDORA *as the knock sounds again)*

Just watch your mouth, pretty baby . . . it's goin' ta get you in trouble one of these days, ya know.

(PANDORA *places bottles on the edge of the table and briskly goes to open back door)*

PANDORA

Maybe it's little Mamma already.

CURT

(mostly to himself)

She wouldn't come around to the back door for nobody.

(CURT *disregards the noise of the kitchen door's lock snapping*

back and the rattle of the night chain being fixed in its hasp)

I have the blackmen this time, right, Rich?

RICH

(reaching for the beer)

Yeah.

ART

(off)

Hello, is Curt home? My name's Art. I ran into Curt this afternoon and he told me to drop by.

PANDORA

(off)

Just a minute . . . I'll see.

(the sound of the door closing is heard, and PANDORA *returns to the main room)*

Curt . . . Curt?

CURT

(setting up his chess pieces; in a bored voice)

Yeah, baby?

PANDORA

There's a guy named Art out here who says you told him to drop around.

CURT

(not looking at her but down at the board)

Invite him in, baby.

*(*PANDORA *exits)*

RICH

Is this the guy?

CURT

(nods, in low voice)

Never a dull moment . . . right, Rich?

RICH

(sarcastic)

Yeah. We're really in ta somethin', man.

(The music changes during the remainder of this scene. "Delilah" and "Parisian Thoroughfare" as recorded by Max Roach and Clifford Brown play. These will be the theme for the scenes between ART *and* PANDORA, *except when other music is necessary to stress altering moods. If act one extends long enough, "Sketches in Spain" by Miles Davis is to be played also, but "Delilah" should be replayed during* PANDORA' *s box scene*

(Offstage, PANDORA *says)*

PANDORA

Just a minute.

(and the noise of the lock and chain is followed by ART *)*

ART

Good evening.

(She leads him into the living room. RICH *has poured beer for* CURT *and himself; he stands and saunters to the radio as if to change stations, but turns after* ART *has passed behind him and sizes up the stranger from the rear)*

CURT

(stands)

Hey, good buddy! You found the place okay, huh?

ART

(pleased by greeting)

Yeah, it wasn't so hard to find but I guess I came around to the wrong door.

CURT

(with a wave)

Awww . . . that's okay. One's good as the other. It's better to come in that way if you're walkin' from Washington Boulevard. You live somewhere 'round there, don't ya?

ART

(hesitant)

Well . . . I did.

CURT

(gesturing)

Here, I want you to meet my wife and a buddy of mine.

(introducing PANDORA *)*

This is my wife, Pandora . . . and . . .

PANDORA

(smiles brightly)

We already met, kinda. He told me his name at the door.

CURT

(ignoring PANDORA *)*

. . . and this is Rich.

RICH

(remains in same spot. ART *turns and* RICH *gives him a casual salute)*

What's happen'n, brother?

CURT

(to PANDORA *and* RICH *)*

This is a guy I met in jail.

(introduces ART *)*

Art Garrison.

(shows ART *a seat on the couch, downstage from* RICH *)*

Yeah, Art was one of the best young cons on Tier Three . . .

(to PANDORA *)*

Get my boy here a drink, baby.

PANDORA

(starts for kitchen)

You drink beer, Art?

ART

Sure . . . that sounds great.

PANDORA

(over her shoulder)

We got some scotch, if you want it.

ART

No, thanks.

*(*RICH *sits, makes opening move, not looking at* ART *)*

CURT

(to RICH *)*

Yeah, if it wasn't for Art here I wouldn't be sittin' here.

RICH

(bored)

Yeah?

CURT

This is the kid who banged Scooter aside the jaw during the riot last summer in the joint.

RICH

(sounding more enthused)

Yeah . . . you were doin' a stretch down at county jail when that happened, weren't you?

CURT

Yeah, man. I was there bigger den shit.

(takes a seat)

Yeah, that paddy matha-fukker, Scooter, was comin' down on me with an ice pick, man . . . we had all been rumblin' up and down the cell block and I slipped on somethin' wet . . . I think it was Cory's blood 'cause Miles and his boys had stomped that mathafukker so good . . .

(during the telling of the incident, PANDORA *stands framed in the kitchen doorway, watching the men)*

And I went to look up and all I could see was that greyeyed mathafukkin' Scooter comin' at me with that ice pick of his . . . He reached down and grabbed my shirt front and drew back his arm and WHAMMO . . .

(indicating ART *)*

. . . just like a bat out'ta hell my boy here had scored on the sucker's jaw.

ART

(pleased)

Well . . . I wouldn't let that white sonna bitch do you in, man.

RICH

(dryly)

What was the beef about, man?

CURT

Well you know Miles goes for the Muslims though he ain't one hisself. Now the Muslims were in a hassle at the joint with the guards and the big people up top because of their religious beliefs, dig?

RICH

(interested)

What do you mean?

CURT

Well, the guards didn't want them havin' their meetin's 'cause they said they were organizin' and plottin'. And the Muslims wanted some of the chow changed 'cause they don't eat the same kind'a food that we do.

RICH

Yeah!

CURT

So while this was all goin' on, Cory . . . a young, wise nigger who thinks he's in ta somethin' . . . well he started agitatin' and signifyin' 'bout who the Muslims think they was. And what made it so rank was a lot of the ofays, ya know, Charles, the white man, start in sayin' things they had held back before, so Miles and some of the boys got together one day and caught that little jive sucker Cory outside his cell block and stomped him so bad the deck was greasy wit' his blood, man. That's when the shit started really goin' down, right there, man. Bumpy, Cory's cousin, come runnin' up, man, and that big nigger kicked Miles square in the nuts and laid out two of his boys before the rest of them got themselves together. By that time some of the whiteys come runnin' up and a few more of Miles' boys. Yeah, the whole shit started right there where Cory lay almost done in . . .

RICH

Yeah . . . I heard a couple of cats got stabbed, man.

CURT

Yeah, man, it was pretty scary for a while, mostly Black cons against white ones except for the studs who just tried to stay out of the shit and the Uncle Toms . . . those Toms we were really out to cool.

RICH

(heated)

Yeah, you should have done those mathafukkers in!

CURT

Even the guards wouldn't come into the cell block and break it up at first . . . a whole lot of shit went down that day.

(looking at ART *)*

I owe my boy here a lot for that day.

ART

(embarrassed)

Yeah, man, I would have liked to have stayed out of it but I couldn't.

CURT

Yeah, Art, I us'ta wonder about that . . .

(a two beat pause)

. . . How could you just go about your business and stay in the middle all the time in that place when so much crap was goin' down?

ART

I just stayed out of everything, that's all.

CURT

But didn't you care about anything, man? Didn't you feel anything when that shit was happen'n to you?

ART

Yeah, I cared but I just didn't let it bother me too much. I just froze up on everything that tried to git in and not too much touched me.

PANDORA

(from doorway)

Talk about somebody bein' cold!

CURT

(having noticed her in doorway for first time, stares at ART *)*

But you don't know how I appreciate what you did, man. It wasn't your fight, man. You weren't takin' sides. You were one of the quiet guys waitin' for trial who just kept his mouth shut and minded his own business.

ART

I never do try and take sides in stir, just serve my time and forget about it, that's all.

*(*PANDORA *has moved out of the doorway)*

CURT

Well, I'm glad you did that time, man, and if there's anything I can ever . . .

*(*RICH *interrupts)*

RICH

What were you in for, Art?

*(*CURT *takes a drink of his beer, lights a cigarette and blows smoke across the table above the two men's heads.* PANDORA *drops something made of glass in the kitchen and curses)*

ART

Well . . . I was waiting for trial . . . attempted murder.

RICH

That's a tough one to have on your rap sheet.

ART

Yeah, it doesn't do your record or you any good, especially when it ain't for money.

CURT

(finally makes answering chess move)

It was over a broad, wasn't it?

ART

(lights a cigarette, offers RICH *a light but is refused)*

Yeah. I guess girls are my main weakness.

RICH

(with unlit cigarette dangling from his lips, makes move)

How much time did you do?

ART

Waited on my trial for nine months at county when the husband of the girl dropped the charges and left town.

CURT

(replies to move)

That's who you shot, the girl's husband?

ART

(his eyes following game)

Yeah.

RICH

(moves quickly)

You pretty good with a gun?

ART

(caught up in game)

I can usually hold one without it blowing my foot off.

RICH

(sharply)

Any simple ass can do that! I asked you are you any good with one!

(The three men are fixed in tableau for a three beat interval; ART *strains forward from his seat and is about to speak)*

CURT

(to RICH *as he makes his move)*

This move's goin' ta show ya ta stop fuckin' with Curt the Kid, good buddy.

(noise of refrigerator opening and slamming, and PANDORA *enters with a bottle and a glass. She pours beer for* ART *and sets the glass down beside him as the men all look at the chess board)*

PANDORA

(in a light mood)

Sorry I took so long, Art. I just dropped the supper.

(*to* CURT)

Honey, the beans are all messed up. Little Mamma won't have anything to eat 'cept eggs.

CURT

(not looking at her)

Didn't want no fuckin' beans anyhow! And I know Mamma Too Tight don't want any either . . . what kind'a shit is that . . . givin' that broad beans on her first night on the streets?

PANDORA

(defensively)

That's all we got, honey . . . You know we won't have any spendin' money until Deeny pays me.

RICH

Why don't you have a seat, Pan?

PANDORA

I gotta finish cleanin' the kitchen . . . I don't want no roaches 'round here. Last place we had we had to split 'cause the roaches took it over. The little mathafukkers got mo' of the food than Curt or me. Soon as I bring in a little money to get some food with . . .

(CURT *looks at her sharply but she is turned toward* RICH *and* ART)

. . . there's mo' of them little mathafukkers there than your eyes could see. And I put too much time in fixin' this pad up nice the way it is to have them little mathafukkers move in on me and try to take it over.

CURT

You better finish up, sweetcake, so I can take you to work.

(the use of the term "sweetcake" is done with derision and seldom with affection. PANDORA *picks up* CURT' *s empty bottles and exits)*

Your move, Richie.

RICH

Are you sure, man?

CURT

Just ask Art, he's been watchin' the game.

ART

Well, I ain't in it, man.

RICH

That's right, you ain't in it.

CURT

(watching ART' *s face)*

Yeah, it's your move, Richie, babe.

RICH

(to ART *)*

That was pretty nice of that girl's ole man to let you off, Art.

ART

Nawh . . . he wanted his ole lady to leave the state with him so he had to drop the charges against me to let her off the hook too.

RICH

She was in it too, huh?

ART

She shot him with me.

CURT

You play this game, Art?

ART

Yeah, some. But I haven't had much practice lately.

CURT

Well, this one's about over.

RICH

(snorts)

Sheeet!

CURT

Maybe you'd like ta play the winner.

RICH

(grimacing before making hesitant move)

Where ya livin' now, Art?

ART

I just got locked out of my room.

RICH

Yeah, Curt said you wanted to make some money.

ART

(intensely)

I have to, man. I'm really on my ass.

CURT

Check!

RICH

(makes move)

Not yet, sucker.

ART

I gotta get out of this town.

RICH

You got a car, ain't ya?

CURT

(moves)

Not long now, Rich.

ART

Yeah, that's about all I got. A car and a suitcase. I've also gotten more jail time in this town than in my whole life, and I've been halfway round the world and all over this country.

RICH

(moves and acts angry)

Yeah, L˙A˙'s no fuckin' good, man. If I was off parole now I would get the first thing on wheels out of here. How 'bout you, Curt? If you weren't out on bail wouldn't you make it?

(CURT *doesn't answer. Stage left, a knock sounds and* PANDORA *comes out of the kitchen striding toward the entrance which serves as the front door to the apartment*)

PANDORA

That must be little Mamma.

CURT

Sure hope it is . . . I would really like ta see that little broad.

PANDORA

(peers through window)

Yeah, there's that chick.

(calling outside in jocular way:)

HEY, BROAD, WHAT THEY DOIN' LETTIN' YOU OUT'TA JAIL?

(an indistinct shout and a laugh comes from outside)

RICH

(to RICH *)*

Checkmate, man!

(Lights lower to blacken the stage)

Act 1, Scene 2

(When the lights go up MAMMA TOO TIGHT *and* SHAKY *sit upon the lowered bed. Faintly reflecting a glow, the bed spread gives them the appearance of sitting upon smoldering coals.* MAMMA TOO TIGHT, *a small, voluptuous girl, is dressed well. Her shift complements her creamy complexion and full-blown build.* SHAKY *is nondescript but dresses in expensive casual clothes.*

CURT, RICH *and* ART *sit in the same area, stage right, facing the bed, forming the lower lip of half-moon, and* PANDORA *has changed to a black cocktail dress and sits upon the stairs to the bathroom. She faces front with a bit of red-ruffled slip peeking beneath and around her black-stockinged legs.*

They all eat chicken from cardboard containers and reach for beers and cigarettes. The light in the kitchen is off, and the radio plays.)

ART

Thanks again, Curt . . . if you hadn't invited me to eat I don't know what I'd do . . . probably had to drive downtown on what little gas I got and eat at one of those Rescue Missions.

MAMMA

(nudging SHAKY *in the ribs)*

Well, I'll be damned . . . Ole Curt done saved himself a soul.

SHAKY

(slow and languid)

Easy, baby, you gonna make me spill my beer.

MAMMA

What you know 'bout eatin' at Rescue Missions, boy?

PANDORA

(interjecting)

You better stop callin' that guy ah boy, Mamma . . . ha ha . . . girl . . . you got mo' gall.

RICH

(drinking beer)

Yeah, Mamma, how fuckin' big do boys grow where you come from?

CURT

(with food in mouth)

Forget about it, Art, glad to have ya. One more don't mean a thing.

PANDORA

Listen ta that, Mamma Too Tight . . .

(mocking)

. . . "One mo' mouf don't mean a thing." . . . We eat beans all week and when you and Curt's friends come in we play big shit! . . . And call out for food and beer.

(CURT, SHAKY *and* ART *stop eating*. CURT *stares at* PANDORA *and* ART *holds his plate like it is hot and he is trying not to drop it on the floor*. SHAKY *eyes* MAMMA TOO TIGHT *and gives a mean scowl*. MAMMA *has seen the look on* CURT' *s face before*. RICH *goes on enjoying his meal*)

MAMMA

(in a jolly tone, to PANDORA)

Girl, you don't have ta tell me a thing . . . these here men think that money can be just picked up off'a them pavements out there like chewin' gum paper . . . until they got ta get out there for themselves.

(she swings off the bed and shows flashes of lingerie)

Like this pretty boy here with the fuzz on his face.

(she approaches ART *and stands so her hips form a prominent profile to* CURT' *s line of vision)*

He ain't even eatin' no mo' . . . and Curt's not either, honey. What I tell ya? These men are somethin' else. So weak from plottin' what we should be doin' to bring some money in that they can't eat themselves.

(puts her plate on coffee table)

I know that Curt is a big strong man . . . he's always lettin' Pan know.

(strong dialect)

. . . So he don't need no help from us frail ass women but maybe ole fuzzy wuzzy face here needs some help.

(her audience is in better humor once more. to ART)

You wants Mamma Too Tight to feeds him some food, baby boy?

SHAKY

Cut out the Magnolia act. Everything wears thin, *Queenie!*

MAMMA

(sudden anger)

Don't you call me no fuckin' Queenie!

SHAKY

(sarcastic)

Anything you say, baby.

(PANDORA *guffaws at* SHAKY' *s tone)*

PANDORA

(mimicking MAMMA *'s drawl*)

But ain't dat you name, hoon e e e?

(MAMMA *ignores* SHAKY *and* PANDORA, *picks drumstick from plate and offers it to* ART *who frowns, and she pulls it away and puts it to her mouth imitating a mother feeding a reluctant child. Finally*, ART *smiles at her as* SHAKY *speaks*)

SHAKY

Why don'chou lighten up, woman!

MAMMA

Lighten up? . . . Damn . . . man . . . I ain't here ten minutes befoe I see your face and you tell *me* to lighten up! I been with you since I hit the streets at noon and you still checkin' up on me . . .don't worry, man . . . I'm goin' ta get right ta work.

SHAKY

(slow and languid)

I know that, baby.

MAMMA

(to PANDORA)

Girl, you should of seen Shaky . . . ha ha ha . . . almost swept me off my feet, girl. Said he loved me and really missed me so much the last ninety days that he almost went out of his mind . . . ha ha . . .

(coyly)

I was so embarrassed and impressed, girl, I liked to have blushed and nearly peed on myself like a sixteen year old girl.

(change of voice)

But the ole sonna bitch didn't fool me

none with that shit! . . . The only thing he missed was that good steady money!

CURT

(piqued)

Why don't you check yourself, Mamma?

MAMMA

(waving CURT' *s threat off and returning to the edge of the bed)*

But, girl, he sho threw some lovin' on me . . . he heee . . . sheeet, I should go away again after this afternoon.

*(*PANDORA *laughs throughout)*

Ummm . . . chile . . . I nearly thought I was on that honeymoon I never had.

PANDORA

You should after that routine, baby.

MAMMA

And then when the sun start goin' down and things got really gettin' romantic, girl . . . this mathafukker says . . .

(lights lower; spot on bed. SHAKY *speaks the line)*

SHAKY

I want you to bring in a yard tonight, baby.

*(*MAMMA *resumes speech. Bed spot off; colored spot on* MAMMA *)*

MAMMA

You what, man?

(colored spot off; bed spot on)

SHAKY

A hundred stone cold dollars, baby. Tonight, baby!

(spot off; lights go up)

MAMMA

(to PANDORA *)*

And girl, do you know what I said?

PANDORA

Yeah, I know what you said.

MAMMA

That's right, baby, I said to Shaky, "How do you want them daddy . . . in fives or tens?"

(laughter halts the speeches and the glasses are filled and fingers cleaned of chicken grease and cigarettes are lit)

CURT

(to SHAKY *)*

Don't let Mamma try and fool you . . . she wanted to see you so bad . . . everytime Pan us'ta go visit her she would say to Pan, "How's that ole dirty Shaky doin'?"

MAMMA

Yeah, I'd ask . . . 'cause I'd be wonderin' why ain't the mathafukker down here.

SHAKY

Now, let's not go into that again, baby.

CURT

Yeah, Mamma . . . you know what's happen'n behind that. You know why Shaky didn't come down . . . you never can tell when they might have a warrant out on him or somethin' and keep him too. You remember what happened at court, don't cha?

MAMMA

Yeah, I remember. How can I forget? The judge said for Shaky to leave the court 'cause everytime I'm on trial he's in the back row hangin' 'round and that last ole woman judge said she knew who Shaky was an' she'd like to put him behind bars instead of me . . . but comin' down to visit me in jail is different, Curt!

SHAKY

(pleading)

Now, baby . . .

CURT

Listen, Mamma . . . how old are you?

MAMMA

Twenty.

CURT

That means you're a big girl now, a woman who should be able to understand things, right?

MAMMA

Yeah, but . . .

CURT

(cutting)

Right! Now listen, baby . . . and listen hard . . . now how many times you been busted?

MAMMA

Thirty-three times . . . but I only fell this once for more than ten days and that was because I got that new fuckin' woman judge. I got the best record in town of any broad on the block I know. Pandora's rap sheet is worst than mine and I was on the block two years before she was.

CURT

Exactly, baby. Now if you didn't have an old man like Shaky out there workin' for you, you'd be out of business and servin' some big time . . . right? Wouldn't that be a drag to be servin' some grand theft time behind givin' up a little body! Pan ain't been snatched since before we were married . . . ain't that right, Pandora? See there? Now let me tell you, baby, and listen hard.

(intensely)

A self-respectin' man won't let this ole lady stay in jail. If he can't get the bail for her or the juice to pay off somebody downtown like Shaky done you to have your time cut to one-third . . .

(disgust)

. . . he's a punk! And any broad that even looks at the jive sucker should get her funky ass run into the ground like a piece of scum!

MAMMA

(on defensive)

I know all that, Curt, but I got so lonely down there. Nothin' down there but broads and most of them butches.

PANDORA

Mamma . . . don't even talk about it. Makes cold chills run up my back just thinkin' 'bout it.

CURT

Yeah, we know it was hard, baby, but you can't afford to lose your old man by his gettin' busted behind a jail visit. That would be a stone trick, Mamma. Nothin' but a hammer . . . Right?

MAMMA

Awww . . . Curt, you try and make it sound so smooth.

PANDORA

He can really make it do that, girl.

RICH

(finishes drinking the last of his beer)

Hey, Shaky, I want you to take a walk with me, okay?

SHAKY

(standing slowly and visibly rocking)

Yeah, man.

(to MAMMA *)*

I'll see you back at the house, baby. Watch yourself.

MAMMA

I'll probably be in early, Shaky. Unless I catch somethin' good.

*(*RICH *and* SHAKY *exit by the front door*. PANDORA *accompanies them and checks the outside before they step out)*

Sheet, Pandora, I thought Shaky was the Chicken Delight man when he knocked. I wasn't here ten minutes

before he was knockin' on the door to see if I had my ride to the club. Didn't even think about feedin' me.

(soulful)

Just give me some good lovin' ta show me where it's at.

PANDORA

These men are somethin' else, girl . . . 'spect a girl to go out'ta here on an empty stomach and turn all kinds of tricks . . . but Curt and me did have some beans for you, girl, but I dropped them.

MAMMA

Well, I'm glad you did.

CURT

(packing away chess board)

I told her you didn't want no beans, Mamma.

MAMMA

I got too many beans in the joint.

PANDORA

(peeved)

Well, that's what I had for you, chick.

MAMMA

(to ART *)*

Hey, pretty baby, why you so quiet?

ART

Oh, I ain't got much to say, I guess.

CURT

This is my boy Art, Mamma. I introduced you when you came in.

MAMMA

(sultry)

I know his name . . . ha ha I just want to know his game, dat's all. Hey, fuzz face, what's yo game? Is you kinda fuzzy wuzzy 'round the edges?

ART

I'm sorry . . . I don't know . . .

CURT

Awww . . . he's okay, Mamma . . . he was in the joint with me. He's just quiet, that's all. Reads too much . . . somethin' you should do more of.

PANDORA

Why should she? Ain't heard of nobody gettin' no money readin'.

MAMMA

(to ART *)*

Now I know your name, fuzzy boy, now you say my name.

ART

(surprise)

Your name?

MAMMA

Yeah. Say MA-MA TOO TIGHT!

ART

I know your name.

MAMMA

But I want you to say it.

ART

I don't have to with you broadcasting it all over the place ever since you been here.

MAMMA

(cross)

You must think you're wise, man.

ART

(in low, even voice)

I am, you big mouthed bitch, and I want you to stop jivin' with me.

*(*PANDORA *giggles*. CURT *looks on enjoying the surprise showing on* MAMMA' *s face)*

MAMMA

Well . . . 'scuse me, tiger.

(walks over to ART *and sits beside him)*

Awww . . . forget it. I always act this way, ask Pan and Curt. 'Specially when I'm ah little bit loaded . . . Hey, Pandora, your friend here ain't got no sense of humor.

PANDORA

Nawh . . . he's too much like Curt. Serious. That's why they probably get along so good, girl . . . they probably made for each other.

(the girls laugh)

CURT

C'mon, Pan . . . it's almost time for you to go to work. Deeny will be callin' nex' thing and that's one mathafukker I don't even want to see much less talk to. Go and get the stuff.

*(*PANDORA *exits through the bathroom door)*

MAMMA

(to ART *)*

You want to know why they call me Mamma Too Tight, pretty baby?

CURT

If Shaky ever heard you callin' my boy that, he'd break your arm, Mamma.

MAMMA

Yeah, he might. But Shaky ain't where nothin's shakin' at the moment . . . Just out givin' Rich a fix . . .

CURT

Both of you bitches talk too much!

MAMMA

(to ART *)*

You know what, fuzz wuzz? I sho wish I had a lil fuzzy wuzzy like you up there some of those cold nights in the joint.

(she gets up and walks to stand before the men. She plays it strictly for laughs, swinging her hips to the radio music and singsongs in a hearty, brazen voice like one of the old time red hot mamma's. Singing)

Why do they call me what they call me, baby? When what they call me is my name.

ART

(dryly)

I have suspicions but I'm not positive.

MAMMA

(ridiculing, but friendly)

You have suspicions as every little fuzzy wuzzy does but let me tell you . . . because my real name is Queenie Mack! Queenie Bell Mack! Ain't that some shit? No self-respectin' whore in the world can go 'round with a name like that unless she's in Mississippi . . . sheeet . . . QUEENIE!

ART

So you named yourself Mamma Too . . .

MAMMA

(cutting)

No! It just happened. I don't know how. I just woke up one day with my name that way . . . And I like it that

way . . . it's me!

(*turning toward* ART)

Don't you think it fits, honey?

ART

I think it really does.

MAMMA

Damn right it does. It makes me feel so alive. That's why I'm glad to be out . . .

CURT

(*yelling*)

HEY, PANDORA!

MAMMA

Man, but it's so good to be high again. It's so good to be free.

(PANDORA *enters from the bathroom and descends the stairs and places a cardboard box on the table as the lights blacken briefly and the music rises*)

Act 1, Scene 3

(*As the lights go up and the music lowers, the scene has shifted*. CURT *and* PANDORA *sit upon the couch, across from* ART, *and* MAMMA TOO TIGHT *has taken the stool* CURT *was seated on. Uncovered, the box waits in the center of the table*. CURT *is licking a brown cigarette as the theme plays*)

CURT

Yeah. We want to make some money, Art, so we can get out of this hole.

(*lights the cigarette and inhales fiercely. Drops head. Two beat pause. In strained voice, holding smoke back*)

We're makin' it to Buffalo, man. You hip to Buffalo?

ART

No, I don't think so . . .

CURT

(*takes another drag*)

It's a good little hustlin' town, I hear. I got a case comin' up here for passin' some bad paper, ya know, forgin' payroll checks . . . and when I get the money to make restitution and give the people downtown some juice, ya know, man, pay them off, I'm makin' it East. But I need some grand theft dough.

ART

But won't you get some time with your record?

CURT

Nawh. Probably not. You see, I'm a good thief. I take money by my wits . . . ya know, with a pen or by talkin' some sucker out of it. It's only seldom that I'm forced to really take any money by force. If I make full restitution for these checks and fix my lawyer up and the other people downtown, I'll get probation. They'll reduce it to a misdemeanor and breakin' probation for somethin' like that ain't nothin' . . . besides, Buffalo's a long way away, man.

PANDORA

(*receiving cigarette from* CURT)

It's supposed to be a good little town. A different scene entirely. I'm due for a good scene for a change.

CURT

Yeah, but we have to get that juice money first, baby. We gotta get us some long money.

MAMMA

Any place is better than L˙A˙ but I heard that Buffalo is really boss.

PANDORA

(*languid*)

It sho is, baby.

MAMMA

I wonder if I could get Shaky to go?

CURT

Sure you could, Mamma. He can get connections to deal this stuff there just like here. That's the idea. When we make our hit and split out of here we're goin'a take as many as we can with us. You know, set up a kinda organization.

PANDORA

(*passing cigarette to* MAMMA)

They really got respect for cats from the coast back there.

ART

(*getting caught up in the mood*)

Yeah, they really do . . . when I . . .

PANDORA

(*cutting speech*)

With me workin' on the side and with Curt dealin' we'd be on our feet in no time.

CURT

We want to be on our feet when we get there, baby.

ART

And that's where I come in, right?

CURT

Right, good buddy.

MAMMA

(*handing cigarette to* ART)

Here, baby.

ART

(*waving it away*)

So what's on your mind, Curt?

MAMMA

(*extending cigarette*)

I said here, baby, I just don't like to hold this thing and see all this bread go up in ashes.

ART

I don't want any.

(*A three beat stop, all caught in tableau staring at* ART, *then* PANDORA *snickers and breaks into a tittering laugh, looking at* CURT)

PANDORA

(*ridicule*)

You and your friends, Curt . . . I thought . . .

CURT

(*heated*)

Shut up, bitch . . . you talk too much!

PANDORA

(*rising anger*)

Why shouldn't I when you bring some square-ass little . . .

(CURT *slaps her; she jumps to her feet and spins to claw him but* CURT *lunges forward and slaps her again, causing her to trip backwards across the edge of the coffee table. From the floor, removing one of her shoes*)

Goddamn you, Curt . . .

(*she begins to crawl to her knees and* CURT *moves around the table after her. Then* ART *steps between them and pushes* CURT *backward on the couch. Surprise is upon* CURT' *s face and* MAMMA TOO TIGHT *seems frozen in place*)

CURT

WHAT THE FUCK'S GOIN' ON, MAN?

ART

(*low*)

Don't hit her anymore, Curt.

CURT

(*incredulous*)

What? . . . Man, are you payin' this woman's bills . . . have you got any papers on her?

PANDORA

(*to* CURT)

ARE YOU PAYIN' MY BILLS, MATHAFUKKER?

CURT

(*rising to attack* PANDORA; ART *blocks his way*)

I've told you to keep your mouth . . .

(*to* ART *when he won't let him pass*)

Now listen, Art, you're like a brother to me but you don't know what's goin' down, man.

ART

Why don't we all sit down and try and relax, Curt? Why don't you do it for me, huh? As a favor. I'm sorry for buttin' in to your business between you and your old lady but somethin' just happens to me, man, when I see a guy hit a girl.

(*after a minute*, CURT *is soothed and sits upon the couch again, glaring at* PANDORA *who holds her shoe like a weapon*)

MAMMA

(*partially recovered*)

Oh, man, I just hit the streets and this is what I run into . . .

CURT

(*intense, to* ART)

What are you doin', man? Squarin' out on me? Man, I've went a long way . . .

ART

(*leaning forward*)

Well, look, Curt . . . I can split . . .

(CURT *stands and looks down on* ART. *Changing expression*, PANDORA *makes a move for the box but* CURT *waves her hand away*)

CURT

No, I don't think you better try that, Art.

(*pause*)

Tell me, Art. Why don't you want to smoke any marijuana?

ART

Why don't . . . I don't understand why you should ask me that.

CURT

Is your playin' hero for Pandora a game to cover up somethin', man?

(MAMMA *is clutching herself as if she has returned to the womb*)

MAMMA

Oh . . . shit shit shit . . . shit . . . just today . . . just today they cut me loose . . . just today.

PANDORA

(*no longer angry, placing hand on* CURT' *s arm*)

Easy, baby, I think he's okay.

CURT

You would!

ART

Now, look, man, I don't put down anybody for doin' what they want but just don't hassle me!

PANDORA

(*hostile, to* ART)

Cool it, baby, you're in some deep trouble now.

MAMMA

Oh, goddamn . . . why can't I just be plain'ass Queenie Bell Mack?

CURT

(*low*)

What's happen'n, brother?

ART

I just don't get high . . . that's all . . .

MAMMA

(*nearly screaming*)

Neither does J˙ Edgar Hoover, sucker, but he don't come in here pretend'n to be no friend!

PANDORA

(*enraged, fearful of losing control, to* MAMMA)

SHUT UP, BITCH! THIS IS CURT AND OUR PLACE. WE GOT MO' TO LOSE THAN JUST OUR ASS. JUST SHUT ON UP!

(MAMMA *looks most like a small girl with wide, moist eyes*)

CURT

For the last time, Art, tell me somethin'.

ART

I just don't . . .

(PANDORA *stands and moves in front of* CURT. *The coffee table separates them from* ART, *but she leans over*)

PANDORA

(*to* CURT, *behind her*)

He's alright, honey. If he were a cop he'd be smokin' stuff right along with us . . . you know that . . .

ART

(*bewildered*)

A cop! . . .

PANDORA

(*sarcastic*)

He's just a little square around the edges, Curt . . .

(*silence, then: to* ART)

Buy why, honey?

ART

(*shrugging sheepishly*)

I had a bad experience once behind pot, that's all.

(MAMMA *chuckles until* CURT *stops her*)

MAMMA

He had a bad experience . . . hee hee hee . . . ha ha ha . . . He had . . .

CURT

(*menance*)

Pan has already told you to check yoursel, woman, he's still my friend.

PANDORA

What was it all about, man . . . can you tell us about it?

ART

I'd rather not . . .

CURT

(*cuttin*)

We know you'd rather not but . . .

PANDORA

(*cutting*)

Now look, Art, you're not givin' us much of a break . . . we don't want to act like this but we got a lot of the future riding on what happens in the nex' few days. Why don't you tell us?

ART

I would but it don't seem that much . . .

CURT

(*not so threatening*)

But it is, Art!

PANDORA

C'mon, trust me. Can't you say anything? We've gone more than half. . .

CURT

Stop rankin' him, will ya!

PANDORA

I'M ONLY DOIN' IT FOR YOU!

(*silence as* CURT *and* PANDORA *stare at each other*)

ART

Yeah, I'll talk about it . . .

(CURT *sits*. PANDORA *moves around the table closer to* ART. *The cigarette has been dropped by* MAMMA *beside the box. "Delilah" plays*)

You see . . . it was about three years ago. I shipped out on a freighter . . . ya know, one of those scows that

fly the Panamanian or Liberian flag but don't really belong to any country . . .

MAMMA

(*in small girl's voice*)

Ain't they American?

ART

Well, in a way. They belong to American corporations and the businessmen don't want to pay high taxes on 'em. They're pretty ratty.

(PANDORA *makes a seat on the floor between the men*)

Well, I went on a four month cruise, ya know, to ports around the West Indies and then to North Africa.

MAMMA

Wow . . . that sounds gassy . . . I wish . . .

PANDORA

(*cutting*)

MAMMA! ART Well, I been blowin' weed since I was about twelve . . .

MAMMA

(*ridicule*)

Ha ha ha . . . since he was twelve . . .

(PANDORA *and* CURT *frown at her and she huddles in her seat and looks cold*)

ART

. . . and everything was cool. I smoked it when I ran into it and never thought about it much unless someone turned me on. But in Tangier it was about as easy to get as a bottle of beer. Man, I had a ball all the while I was over there and before I left I bought a big bag.

(*showing with his hands*)

This big for about five bucks. All the way back on my night watches I just smoked grass and just thought of what the guys on my corner back home would say when I would pull out a joint or two and just give it to them. Prices back east are about triple what they are here, so you can guess what it was worth . . . And all the broads I would make . . . you know how it goes . . . take a broad up to your room and smoke a little weed and if you have anything goin' for you at all, man, that's it.

PANDORA

(*disgust*)

Yeah, there's a lot of stupid broads in this world.

ART

(*sensing the reduced tension*)

And I could still sell some when my money got low and come out beautiful. I was really feeling good about that grass, Curt. Well, this tub docks in Philly about 1 A˙M˙ and I have to leave ship and when I get to the station I find that my train don't leave until 2 the next afternoon. I got my pay and my belongings, so I stash most of my bags in a locker at the station, a bag of weed is in one but I have about half a dozen joints on me. Now I know Philly a little. I know where there's an after-hour joint so I grab a cab and go over there. The

place is jumpin' . . . they're havin' a fish fry, and I start in drinkin' and talkin' to girls but none of them are listen'n 'cept for seven bucks for them and three for the management for rentin' one of the upstairs rooms, and I ain't buyin' no cock . . . not in the States . . .

PANDORA

Well, I'm glad of that. I can take squares but not tricks, baby.

CURT

(*to* PANDORA)

You still runnin' your mouth, ain't you?

ART

So I start talkin' with some guy and he tells me of a place he knows 'cross town that's better than this one. He looks okay to me. A blood. Dressed real sharp with a little goatee and everything. I had been talkin' to him about bein' out to sea and since he don't try and con me into a crap game and is buyin' one drink for every one of mine, I don't give a damn where we go 'cause I got the whole night to kill.

MAMMA

Oh wow . . . I know this is the bad part . . .

PANDORA

Listen, Mamma.

MAMMA

(*turning her face away*)

I don't like to hear bad things.

ART

So we drinkin' bottles of beer and drivin' up Broad Street in Philly in his old wreck of a Buick and I think how it would be nice to turn on and get really loaded before we get where we're goin'. So I reach for my pocket but it's wintertime and I got on a pea jacket and sweaters and I have trouble gettin' to my pocket. And while I was lookin' I start in laughin'.

CURT

Laughin'?

ART

Yeah, I start wonderin' what would happen if this was a cop I was with and the idea was just too much. So funny. So I started in laughin'. And the guy asks me what I was laughin' at and I said I was just laughin' about him bein' a cop. And he said that he was and how did I know.

(*two beat pause*)

I don't know how I got out of that car or away from him. But soon after I was pukin' my guts up, and I threw those joints into a sewer and they wouldn't go down 'cause snow and ice was cloggin' it up. And I was stompin' on 'em so they would go down and gettin' sick and after a while my feet were all covered with ice and snow and puke and marijuana . . . Ya know . . . I had nearly twenty bucks worth of dope frozen to the soles of my shoes.

MAMMA

(*seriously*)

Awww . . . no, man . . . I can't stand any more.

PANDORA

(giggling)

That's the best trip I've been on this week, Art.

ART

Nawh, really . . . baby. And the bag . . . I left it in a locker. Not the one I used but another empty one.

MAMMA

Those janitors must'a naturally been happy the next day.

ART

Yeah, they must have been but I couldn't even think of the stuff for a long time without wanting to heave up my guts.

CURT

That must'a been pretty scary, man.

(PANDORA *has reached over and gotten the cigarette and re-lit it*)

PANDORA

(*offering it to* ART)

Now it's time to get back on the horse, cowboy.

ART

(placing hand on stomach)

I don't think I can.

MAMMA

You'll never think about that time in Philly again after the first drag, baby.

CURT

C'mon, man, you're already one of us. Do you think I'd bring you in if I thought you'd be a square?

PANDORA

Don't say that, Curt. He's not. Somethin' like what happened to him can mess up your mind about things.

(she stands over him and puffs on the cigarette. Staring at him)

Now don't think about anything . . . just look into my eyes.

(*she inhales once more and gives the cigarette to* ART)

Now, here, put it in your mouth.

ART

(takes it and puts to lips)

I can do it all right but I just don't want to.

PANDORA

(staring)

Look into my eyes and inhale. Don't think about it being in your hand.

(ART *inhales and looks at her*)

All the way down now and hold it.

MAMMA

Don't ever say you don't believe in witches, boy.

CURT

Cool it, Mamma!

PANDORA

Now one more drag, Art.

(ART *takes another puff and hands the reefer to* CURT. ART *has a great grin on his face*)

ART

So that's what's in Pandora's box?

(lights change)

PANDORA

(fantasy)

Among other things, Art. Among other things. But those have been lies you've been told about bad things

comin' out of Pandora's box.

MAMMA

Most people think that a girl's box is in other places.

PANDORA

Nothin' can be found bad in there either. People only bring evil there with them. They only look for evil there. The sick . . .

ART

What do you mean by sick?

PANDORA

The come freaks, that's who. The queers who buy sex from a woman.

MAMMA

(bitterly)

Yeah, they say we're wrong but they're the queers . . . payin' for another person's body.

CURT

(in euphoria, musing)

Art, my man, we're goin'a Buffalo . . . goin' one day real soon.

PANDORA

(repulsion)

Some of them are real nice lookin' cats. Not old with fat greasy bellies. Real nice lookin' studs.

(bitterly)

Those are the real queers you have ta watch. They want ta hurt women.

MAMMA

You hip ta that, baby? Those muscle cats, you know, muscle queens . . . always wantin ta freak out on ya.

ART

And that's all that comes out of Pandora's box?

(CURT *pulls a nickel-plated revolver out of the box*)

CURT

No. Right now this is the most important thing. There's always something new in there.

(*handing gun to* ART)

Feel it, brother.

(ART *takes the gun. He is caught up in the music and with his new friends*)

ART

It's a good one.

MAMMA

Looks how it shines.

(lights change)

ART

(dreamlike)

Yeah . . . like Pandora's eyes.

(lights change)

PANDORA

(fantasy)

Nothin' bad comes out of me or from my box, baby. Nothin' bad. You can believe that. It's all in what you bring to us.

(lights change)

MAMMA

That's wha's happen'n baby.

CURT

It's yours now, Art, as much yours as mine. Can you handle it, brother?

ART

(*looking at* PANDORA *and taking a new reefer*)

If that's my job, brother.

(the cigarette has been replaced by a new one and others are in the hands of the group; PANDORA *drags in deeply)*

PANDORA

Buffalo's goin'a be a gas.

(the phone rings from the dressing room and CURT *goes to answer. His shadow can be seen upon the wall at*

the top of the stairs)

CURT

(off)

Yeah, Deeny . . . yeah yeah yeah . . . yeah, man . . . yeah.

MAMMA

Who ever heard of a telephone in the toilet?

PANDORA

It's in the dressing room next to the bathroom, Mamma.

MAMMA

Sho is strange . . . Hey, are you goin'a Buffalo too, fuzz wuzz?

ART

It looks that way.

PANDORA

(smiling)

I think I'll like that, Art. I think that'll be nice.

(a knock sounds at the front door. CURT' *s shadow hangs up the phone and retreats further into the area)*

CURT

(off)

PANDORA! MOVE! GODDAMN IT! GET A MOVE ON!

(ART *stands as* PANDORA *jumps to her feet. He has a cross expression as he looks toward the dressing room entrance)*

ART

(*to* PANDORA)

Can I help you?

(PANDORA *shakes her head*)

Is there anything I can do?

PANDORA

No, I don't think anybody can do anything, especially you.

(she places the gun and the marijuana in the box and hurries up the stairs. The knock comes again)

MAMMA

(still seated, toward door)

JUST A MINUTE!

(ART *watches* PANDORA *enter dressing room*)

You want to get the door, Art?

ART

I learned once never to open another man's door.

(PANDORA *and* CURT, *in coats, come from the dressing room;* PANDORA *has her costumes in her arms.* MAMMA TOO TIGHT *gets up and walks downstage*)

CURT

That fuckin' Deeny wants you to rehearse some new music before your act, Pan.

PANDORA

Sonna bitch! Always late payin' somebody and always wantin' you to work your ass off.

CURT

Is your car parked far, Art?

ART

Not too far.

MAMMA

(looking out window)

It's only Rich.

CURT

Good. He can stay here and watch the phone while we're at the club. First we'll stop and get you some gas, Art, and then you can take us to the Strip Club.

PANDORA

Is your car big enough to get us all to the Strip Club on Western, Art?

ART

It'll even get us as far as Buffalo, Pandora.

(They exit. RICH *enters, turns in doorway and is seen talking to someone outside. Then he shuts door,*

saunters gracefully across the room and turns the radio off. Lights dim out as he spreads upon the couch. Curtain)

Act 2

(The curtain opens showing the Strip Club, or rather, the suggested representation of a cheap night club in the Wilshire area of Los Angeles, featuring "Bronze" strip-teasers. But the effect should be directed toward the illusions of time, place and matter. Reality is questionable here. The set should be painted in lavish phony hues except for the bare brown floor. Seeing the set, the female audience should respond: "gorgeous, lovely, marvelous, delightful," and with similar banalities. The men should wonder if the habitat of whores is not indeed the same region as their creatures of private myth, dream and fantasy.

A rotating color-wheel, in front of the major lights, should turn constantly throughout this scene, giving an entire spectrum of altering colored shadows. Additional colored lights and spots should be used to stress mood changes and the violence of the ending scene.

A MUSICIAN *plays randomly at the piano. He is tall, wearing a dark suit with an open-necked dark shirt. The* BARTENDER, *wiry with his head shaven clean, sweeps the floor and empties ash trays. A few customers sit and watch the* MUSICIAN, *and later, the* GROUP, *as the show hasn't begun.*

The voice which is heard at the close of this act can be that of a customer.

Two other MUSICIANS *enter and climb upon the stage.*

PIANO PLAYER

(joking, to BASS PLAYER *seated at piano)*

Hey, man, they lookin' for bass players all up and down the street but you cats are all bangin' out chords on out of tune pianos.

BASS PLAYER

What's happen'n, man? Say . . . listen to this . . .

(he plays a couple of frames)

What about that, man . . . huh?

PIANO PLAYER

Man, like I said . . . you're a damn good bass man . . .

BASS PLAYER

(getting up)

What you say about somebody lookin' for bass men? . . . Man! Turn me on. I wouldn't be here in this trap if I knew where one of those gigs were.

DRUMMER

(seated, working up a beat)

Yeah, man, they need you like they need me.

PIANO PLAYER

(wryly)

How's it feel to keep gettin' replaced by a juke box?

(BASS PLAYER *begins working with* DRUMMER. PIANO PLAYER *strikes a few chords then lights a cigarette*)

BASS PLAYER

Hey, where's Stew and Ronny? I want to practice those new charts before Pandora gets in.

PIANO PLAYER

(blowing smoke out)

They quit.

BASS PLAYER

(halting)

What!

DRUMMER

Deeny wouldn't pay them this afternoon and pushed the new charts on them. They didn't want to learn new scores, not getting paid the money owed them, so they quit.

BASS PLAYER

Just like that . . . they quit?

PIANO PLAYER

This is our last night here, too. Deeny's in trouble with the union. No more gigs here until the hearin'.

BASS PLAYER

Awww, man . . . there's always some shit with that jive-ass sucker. Is we gettin' our bread from Deeny tonight?

DRUMMER

Who knows? He don't have to pay until the last performance, and the union says stay on the gig until tonight.

BASS PLAYER

We always gettin' put in some cross . . .

PIANO PLAYER

Yeah, man. But juke boxes don't go on strike and Deeny knows we know it, so let's take care of business.

BASS PLAYER

Man, don't tell me that . . . the broads can't dance to no juke box.

PIANO PLAYER

(seriously)

Why not, man?

BASS PLAYER

It just ain't done, man. No machine ain't never goin'a take a musician's play from him when it comes to providin' music for shows.

PIANO PLAYER

Don't believe it, baby . . . in a couple of mo' years they'll find a way. Broads will be shakin' their cans to canned music just as good as to your playin' or mine and the customers will be payin' even higher prices . . . no body wins, man. Least of all us. C'mon, let's hit it . . .

(he begins playing "Delilah" as PANDORA, MAMMA TOO TIGHT *and* CURT *make their entrances. The girls wave at the* MUSICIANS *and stop at the bar, then move to a table near the bandstand.* PANDORA *places her costumes on an empty chair of a nearby table.* CURT *stands with his back to the bar)*

Okay. That's better . . . c'mon . . . Cook! . . .

BASS PLAYER

(not enthused, to MAMA *who waves again)*

Hey, pretty girl . . .

(ART *walks in, saunters to the cigarette machine*; CURT *joins the girls*)

CURT

Hey, I wonder where everybody's at?

DRUMMER

(stopping, followed by others)

Hey . . . hey . . . what's the use of this fuckin' shit? . . .

PIANO PLAYER

What's happen'n now, man?

(DRUMMER *hops from stage*)

MAMMA

Damn . . . Stew and Ronny must be late, Pan.

PANDORA

(*to* BARTENDER)

What happened to your boss, Deeny, Chico?

(BARTENDER *ignores her*)

DRUMMER

(*to* PIANO PLAYER)

Not a thing, man . . . everything's cool . . .

(*goes to bar, to* BARTENDER)

Hey, Chico. Give me a screwdriver and charge it to your boss.

BARTENDER

Deeny ain't in the charity business, baby.

(ART *sits down with his friends. One of the customers leaves*)

PANDORA

(*to* BARTENDER)

Yeah, baby, give me the usual and give my friends what they want. Put it on my tab.

DRUMMER

(*to* BARTENDER)

You let me and Deeny worry about that, cool breeze. Give me a screwdriver like I said.

(BARTENDER *goes behind bar and begins mixing* DRUMMER' *s drink*)

BARTENDER

(*sullenly to* PANDORA)

When you gonna take care of that tab, sweetcake?

PANDORA

(angry)

When your fuckin' boss pays me, mister! Now get us our drinks, please!

CURT

(to BASS PLAYER *who stands beside instrument)*

Where's Deeny?

(PIANO PLAYER *has gotten off of stage and talks to* DRUMMER *at the bar. A customer goes to jukebox and looks over the selections*)

PIANO PLAYER

What's happen'n, man? We got to make this gig . . . that's what the union says.

DRUMMER

Fuck the union.

BASS PLAYER

(*to* CURT)

It's a mystery to me, Curt.

MAMMA

(*to* BASS PLAYER)

That number's a gassy one, honey. Pan's gonna work by that, ain't she?

BASS PLAYER

Looks that way, Mamma, if anybody works at all tonight.

PIANO PLAYER

(*to* DRUMMER)

Awww, man . . . you know I know how you feel . . .

DRUMMER

Well, just don't run that crap down to me. I'm just fed up. The union screws you out of your dues and the clubs fuck you every chance they get . . .

PIANO PLAYER

It ain't exactly that way . . . now if . . .

MAMMA

Don't you like Pan's new number, Art?

(ART *doesn't answer. The Customer drops a coin into the jukebox and punches a selection: "Something Cool" sung by June Christie is played*)

PANDORA

(*to* ART *and* MAMA)

Can't come in here one day without some shit goin' down. Where's the brass so I can rehearse?

MAMMA

They better get here soon, honey. It'll be too late after a while.

BASS PLAYER

(*to* PAN)

Forget about it, Pan. They

ain't no brass tonight.

(*to* PIANO PLAYER)

Well I know all that, but it's no use rehearsin' without any brass and if this is our last night anyhow . . .

CURT

(rising and going to the bar)

You said this is the last night, man?

PANDORA

(*to* BASS PLAYER)

NO BRASS!

MAMMA

(*to* ART)

You hear what he said?

BASS PLAYER

(putting down instrument)

Hey, fix me a C˙C˙ and ginger ale, Chico!

(customer that played record goes to the bar and sits down)

PANDORA

(*to* BARTENDER)

Hey, what about our drinks, man!

BARTENDER

Okay, Pandora . . . just a minute.

CURT

Hey, fellas . . . what's goin' down?

(*The* MUSICIANS *tell* CURT *about the trouble as the scene plays on in center stage at the table. The conversations should overlap as they have but become increasingly rapid and confusing if necessary.*

After the MUSICIANS *are served the* BARTENDER *takes the orders at* PANDORA' *s table as* CURT *continues to talk at the bar*)

PANDORA

Shit . . . no brass . . . musicians quittin' . . . I ain't got no job no more.

MAMMA

Yeah. It don't look so good but perhaps Deeny can do somethin' when he comes in . . .

PANDORA

Deeny . . . shit . . . Deeny . . . all he can do! . . .

(furious, searching for words)

Why, shit, woman! Deeny can't even do numbers and shit cucumbers!

ART

Thanks for the drink, Pan.

PANDORA

Is that all you can do, man? Say thank you!

ART

No. It's not the only thing.

(MAMMA *gets up and goes over to the* BASS PLAYER *who drops out of the conversation between* CURT, *the other two* MUSICIANS *and the* BARTENDER.

Another customer leaves, leaving only one sitting upon a stool, attempting to get the BARTENDER'S *attention*)

BARTENDER

Well, look, man, I only work here. You better settle that with Deeny.

(behind the bar the phone rings. The BARTENDER *answers)*

CURT

If that's Deeny I want to talk to him.

BARTENDER

Hey, man, I'm talkin' on the phone.

DRUMMER

Let me talk to the mathafukker!

(*he tries to reach across the bar*)

BARTENDER

(backing off)

Hey, cool it! Wait!

PIANO PLAYER

(grabbing DRUMMER' *s arm)*

Hold it, man!

DRUMMER

Take your fuckin' hands off me, baby!

BARTENDER

Wait, I said.

CURT

Tell Deeny I'm waitin' for him.

(DRUMMER *breaks away from* PIANO PLAYER *and begins around the bar.* BARTENDER *reaches under bar for a weapon*)

BARTENDER

(shouts)

WAIT!!!

(the scene freezes in tableau except for the BARTENDER, PANDORA *and* CURT. *Lights go down to purples and deep shadow shades as an eerie spot plays upon the table. Occasionally from the shadows voices are heard. In shadows)*

Okay, Deeny. I'll be expectin' ya.

PANDORA

(*to* ART)

So he's comin'.

ART

Yeah, no need to wait for very long now.

PANDORA

What else can you do, Art?

ART

What else can I do except say thank you, you mean?

PANDORA

Yeah. That's what I mean.

ART

I can wait, Pandora.

PANDORA

(jolly)

What the good of waitin' when things have ta be done? Is that why you have to eat at Rescue Missions and get favors from friends, baby? 'Cause you waitin'? Tell me. What are you waitin' on, Art?

ART

Me? I'm just waitin' so I won't jump into somethin' too fast and I think you should do the same.

PANDORA

I didn't know you gave out advice too. But I wish I could take some of it. Ya see, we're already in the middle of some deep shit . . . There just ain't time to sit back and cool it, honey . . .

ART

(disregarding the ridicule in her voice, soothing)

Yes you can . . . just sit back and look around and wait a while. You don't have to do anything . . . baby, the whole world will come to you if you just sit back and be ready for it.

PANDORA

(serious)

I wish I could. But so much has to be done and we keep fallin' behind.

BARTENDER

(in shadow)

Now what can I do, man? Deeny left with Pete and he said he'd be right back and for you guys to practice with the girls.

(One of the customers who walked out enters with a show girl. She is dark and thin and pretty in a tinseled way. They stop in the shadows and whisper and the girl separates from him, enters the light, passes through

and heads toward the dressing rooms in the rear. The customer takes a seat at the bar. He is engulfed by shadows and becomes frozen in place like the others)

PANDORA

(nodding to show girl as she passes)

Hi, Cookie. I really dig that dress, baby.

ART

Things can always get worst, Pan.

PANDORA

Oh, you're one of those? How can they? Just lost my job. This was to keep us goin' until you guys turned up somethin' big and I didn't even get paid for the last two weeks so I know this just means another great big zero.

ART

What do you think will happen now?

PANDORA

I don't know . . . the job Curt's got planned can't be pulled off until three more days and in a week we got to have all our money together for the restitution and juice . . . not to mention the goin' away money. And I'm not even goin'a get paid for the gig.

ART

Haven't you got any now?

PANDORA

Just a couple of hundred but we can't go into that. Got to hold onto it. We wouldn't eat if we didn't have to. We got to hold on to every cent.

BARTENDER

(in shadows)

Do you want that scotch with anything?

(DRUMMER *momentarily breaks out of position*)

DRUMMER

I ain't finished talkin' yet, Chico.

BARTENDER

Just a minute, man.

(MAMMA *breaks out of position and goes to* PANDORA)

MAMMA

Lend me a dime, Pan. I got to call Shaky.

PANDORA

(fishing in her outsized purse)

You got somethin' workin', baby?

MAMMA

Yeah, Slim's gonna get somethin' from Shaky.

PANDORA

That's workin'.

(she gives MAMMA *a coin.* MAMMA *enters the shadows and walks to the rear of the club.* PANDORA *notices* ART *looking at her)*

Forget about her. Shaky's got her up tight. All you could do is play young lover a little. You can't support her habit, Art.

ART

She can't have a habit if she's just hit the street.

PANDORA

She's got one. What do you think they came in high on? In a couple more days she'll be hooked as bad as before. Shaky'll see to that.

ART

What does she do it for?

PANDORA

What does . . .? Awww, man . . . what kinda question is that? I thought you knew somethin', baby.

ART

I tried to ask on honest question, Pan.

PANDORA

Is it an honest question when you don't have anything to go by to compare her experience with yours?

ART

I don't know. Is it?

PANDORA

Do you know how it feels havin' somebody paw all over you everyday?

ART

Well, no . . .

PANDORA

Then you don't know that she has to use that stuff to put off the reality of it happen'n?

ART

Oh, I see.

PANDORA

(bitter)

Yeah, you see. Do you see her givin' up her body everyday and murdering herself everyday? Is that what the world has brought to her, Art? That's all she can look forward to each day . . . killin' herself with that needle by inches. She has her fix, and maybe a bust and she has keepin' her man. She just takes her fixes to get through the day and Shaky keeps her on it so she'll need him more.

ART

That's too bad.

PANDORA

Wait a minute, Art. Don't sing no sad songs for that woman, you understand? She's not askin' for your pity. She's a real woman in some ways and she won't let you take it away from her by your pity. She'd spit on your pity.

ART

(annoyed)

And you?

(lights change)

PANDORA

(fantasy)

And me? . . . Well I ain't no whore . . . I'm just makin' this money so Curt and me can get on our feet. One day we goona own property and maybe some businesses when we get straight . . . and out of this town.

ART

In Buffalo?

PANDORA

Maybe if we decide to stay there but I'm really an entertainer. I'll show you my act one day and Curt's got a good mind. He's a good hustler but he's givin' that up after a while. He can be anything he wants.

(lights change)

ART

What does he want?

PANDORA

He wants what I want.

ART

How do you know?

PANDORA

He tells me . . . We talk about it all the time.

ART

Can you be sure?

PANDORA

Sure?

ART

Yeah . . . like Mamma's sure she'll always get her fix and her bail paid.

PANDORA

You little smooth faced punk . . . wha . . .

ART

(*cutting*)

Some guys are really lucky.

PANDORA

Kiss my ass, sucker!

ART

Curt and Shaky are really into something.

PANDORA

Yeah! Because they're men!

ART

Is that what bein' a man is, bein' lucky?

PANDORA

No. It's from gettin' what you want.

ART

And how do you get what you want, Pan?

PANDORA

You go after it.

ART

And after you have it?

PANDORA

Then maybe it's yours and you can do whatever you want with it.

ART

And what if I wanted you, Pandora?

PANDORA

(*three beat pause*)

You don't have enough to give me, Art. What could you give me that would make things better for me?

ART

I'm not a giver, Pan, I'm a taker.

(*Lights go up evenly. Figures become animated and resume activities. The* BARTENDER *pours drinks and nods to grumbling* MUSICIANS *and to* CURT. *A customer goes to jukebox and drops coin in. "Parisian Thoroughfare" plays. The show girl, in thin robe, revealing skimpy costume, walks from the rear and takes seat beside customer she entered with.* MAMMA TOO TIGHT *goes to the table and sits*)

MAMMA

(*brightly*)

What you guys been talkin' bout so long?

PANDORA

Nothin' much, why?

MAMMA

Oh nothin' . . . just thought I'd ask. But the way you and ole fuzz wuzz was goin' at it and lookin' at each other . . .

PANDORA

Looks can't hurt you, Mamma, but your big mouth can.

MAMMA

(*fake surprise*)

Pan . . . I didn't mean . . .

PANDORA

I'm sure you didn't, Mamma!

MAMMA

(*now hurt*)

Now listen, Pan. If you can't take a little teasin' . . . What's wrong with you? This is my first day home and you been on my ass all the time. Girl . . . you been the best friend I ever had, but lighten up.

PANDORA

Awww, Mamma . . . let's not you and me start in actin' flaky . . .

ART

Would you like a drink, Mamma?

MAMMA

(*pleased*)

Yeah . . . but you can't pry Chico from behind that bar.

(ART *stands and places hand upon* MAMMA' *s shoulder*)

ART

That's okay. Just sit.

(*he goes to bar and stands beside* CURT *who has his back to him, drinking and brooding*)

MAMMA

(*to* PANDORA)

Hey, he's so nice.

PANDORA

See . . . I told you I wasn't tryin' to steal your little playmate.

MAMMA

(*serious*)

If I didn't know you was kiddin' I wouldn't take that, Pan.

PANDORA

You wouldn't? . . . Well, I wasn't kiddin', broad!

MAMMA

(*half-rising*)

Hey, check yourself, girl. This is me! Remember? Mamma Too Tight. Don't you know me? Lil ole Queenie Bell Mack from Biloxi, Mississippi.

PANDORA

Okay, Sit down before you trip over yourself. I know who you are.

MAMMA

(*sitting*)

And I know you too, baby. Remember I was the one who was there those times so many yesterdays ago. Remember? I was there with you holding your hand in those dark, little lonely rooms all them nights that your man was out on a job . . . Remember how we shivered together, girl? Remember how we cried together each time he got busted and sent away again . . . I'm your friend, baby . . . and you actin' like this to me?

PANDORA

(*genuine*)

I'm sorry, Mamma. It's just that Art. He's different. Everything seems different when he's around.

MAMMA

I think I know what you mean, Pan. I think I know . . .

(*Lights dim; color-wheel still throws pastel shadows.* CURT *and* ART *stand in spot at end of bar. In the shadows there are rustles from the other people and lighted cigarettes are through the gloom toward mouths which suck at them like spiders draining fireflies.* CURT *turns*)

CURT

Hey, Art. Sorry to put you through all this hassle but some bad shit is goin' down, man. I'm really gettin' worried . . . If things keep breakin' bad like this . . .

ART

Don't worry about me, Curt. I'm just along for the ride. Try and get yourself together.

It don't matter to me what you have to go through to get yourself straight, man. Just work it on out.

(*spot off* ART *and* CURT. *Spot on show girl and customer*)

CUSTOMER

How 'bout it, sugar?

SHOWGIRL

Are you kiddin', man?

CUSTOMER

(*whining*)

Well Christ . . . twenty-five bucks . . . what's it lined with . . . gold or somethin'?

SHOWGIRL

You see those two broads over at that table?

(*lights on* PANDORA *and* MAMMA)

CUSTOMER

Yeah. You suggestin' that I hit on them?

SHOWGIRL

Yeah. Do that. The one in the black dress won't even speak to you unless you're ready to leave a hundred or more . . . and besides . . . she has to like your type first. The other one might consider it for fifty.

CUSTOMER

Who's the girl in the black dress?

SHOWGIRL

That's *Pandora.* She headlines the Revue. You have to give her twenty bucks just to get her phone number. So why don't you go hit on her?

(*lights off. Spot on* BARTENDER)

BARTENDER

You call yourselves artists and then you want me to bleed for you? What kinda crap is that?

DRUMMER

(*in shadows*)

Listen you jive time whisky-pourer. We are artists and I don't care what you call us or how you bleed. It's cats like you and your boss who make us all the time have to act like thugs, pimps and leeches to just make it out here in this world.

BARTENDER

So why ya tellin' me? So make it some other way?

PIANO PLAYER

(*in shadows*)

It's just impossible to talk to you people . . . it's just impossible to be heard anymore.

(*spot off* BARTENDER. *Spot on* CURT *and* ART)

CURT

Yeah . . . when I first met her, Art. You should of seen her. It was a joint somethin' like this . . .

(*lights off; spot picks up* PANDORA *standing in the door looking younger, nervous.* CURT *crosses stage to meet her as he speaks. Entering light*)

She was just eighteen . . . had the prettiest pair of tits poking right out at me . . . sharp enough to put your eyes out.

(*he takes* PANDORA *in his arms and kisses her violently. She resists but he is overwhelming*)

PANDORA

(*young voice*)

I beg your pardon, mister.

CURT

I said that you're beautiful . . . that I want you . . . that you are mine forever . . . that it will always be this way for you, for you are mine.

(*he brutally subdues her. Her hair falls across her face. Her face has that expression that prisoners sometime have when they are shifted without prior explanation from an old cell to an unfamiliar cell, equally as old*)

PANDORA

Are you the man I'm to love?

CURT

(*dragging her into the shadows*)

Don't talk of something you'll never know anything about . . .

(*they speak from the shadows now, facing the audience*)

PANDORA

I can't love you? I can't love you if I even wanted? . . .

CURT

You are mine . . . my flesh . . . my body . . . you are in my keeping.

PANDORA

Is it so much to ask for . . . just to be your woman?

CURT

You will do as I say . . . your flesh, your soul, your spirit is at my command . . . I possess you . . .

PANDORA

First there were others . . . now there is you . . . always always the same for me . . .

(*lights change*)

CURT

(*in shadows, walking toward* ART)

Yeah . . . she was ready . . . has always been.

(*spot on* ART. CURT *enters light*)

ART

Pandora's a beautiful girl, Curt. You're lucky, man, to have her. I envy you.

CURT

Thanks, Art.

ART

Don't mention it, don't mention it at all.

(*lights go down. Come up with* SHAKY *sitting at the table with* MAMMA *and* PANDORA)

SHAKY

What's happen'n, baby?

MAMMA

Nothin' yet, Shaky. Give me time. The joint ain't even open yet.

SHAKY

Don't take too long, woman.

MAMMA

Give me time, Shaky. Why you got to come on so strong, man? You know I always take care of business. You know I got to get used to it again. Didn't I set up that thing between you and Slim?

SHAKY

Yeah, baby. But that's my department. You take care of business on your side of the street.

(*the* BASS PLAYER *comes over to the table. To* BASS PLAYER)

Let's take a walk, poppa.

BASS PLAYER

After you, Shake Shake.

MAMMA

I'll be here, Shaky.

SHAKY

Let's hope you're either here or there . . . okay?

MAMMA

Shaky . . . you're goin' too fast. Don't push me so hard.

SHAKY

(*leaving*)

Tonight, baby. One hundred stone cold dollars, baby.

(*light on show girl and customer*)

SHOWGIRL

They're alone. Why not now?

CUSTOMER

Okay . . . okay . . . twenty-five you get . . . after the show tonight.

(*lights off; spot on* CURT *and* ART)

CURT

When I saw you in action, Art. I said to myself I could really use that kid. Man, you're like a little brother to me now, man. I watch the way you act around people. You think on your feet and study them like a good gambler does. You're like me in a lot of ways. Man, we're a new breed, ya know. Renegades. Rebels. There's no rules for us . . . we make them as we break them.

ART

Sounds kind'a romantic, Curt.

CURT

And why shouldn't it? Man, this ain't a world we built so why should we try and fit in it? We have to make it over the best we can . . . and we are the ones to do it. We are, man, we are!

(*spot on* MAMMA)

MAMMA

I don't know why I'm this way . . . I just am. Is it because my name is different and I am different? Is it because I talk like a spade?

PANDORA

(*from shadows*)

Take a look at that! Just because this white broad's been hangin' out with us for a couple of years she's goin' ta blame that bad talk on us.

(*light on table. To* MAMMA)

When you brought your funky ass from Mississippi woman we couldn't even understand . . . sheet . . . we taught you how to speak if anything!

MAMMA

(*out at audience*)

All I know is that I'm here and that's where I'm at . . . and I'll be here until somethin' happens . . . I wish Shaky wouldn't push me so . . . I want to be good for him . . . I want him to be my man and care about me a little . . .

(ART *brings* MAMMA *her drink*. CURT *sits with him at the table*)

CURT

(*to* PANDORA)

Don't look so pissed off, honey.

PANDORA

Why shouldn't I? Everything's gone wrong.

(CURT *stands and takes* PONDORA' *s arm*)

CURT

C'mere, baby. Let me talk to you.

(*they walk into the shadows*)

ART

Just saw Shaky. He didn't stay long.

MAMMA

Nawh. He's gone to take care of some business. Wants me to stay here and take care of mine.

ART

I guess that's what you should do then.

MAMMA

Should I? He's rushin' me too fast, that's what he's doin'. He knows I take a little time gettin' right inside before I can go back to work but he's pushin' me. It's Curt's and Pan's fault . . . they're desperate for money and they're pressin' Shaky.

ART

Maybe you should try and talk to him or to Curt.

MAMMA

It wouldn't do any good!

ART

It wouldn't? If you were my girl I'd listen to what you had to say.

MAMMA

Oh, man, knock off the bullshit!

ART

But I would, really.

MAMMA

(*hesitant*)

You would? I bet you're full of shit.

ART

Sure I would. I look younger but I know what you need . . . and I know what you want.

MAMMA

(*giggling*)

You do?

(*peering over her glass*)

What do I need and want, Fuzz Wuzz?

ART

Understanding.

MAMMA

What!

ART

(*soft*)

Understanding.

MAMMA

Sheet . . .

ART

(*softer*)

Understanding.

(*lights down; spot on* CURT *and* PANDORA)

PANDORA

I'm gettin' fed up with all this shit, Curt. We seem to be goin' backwards not forward.

CURT

I know that, baby. But things will get straightened out. You know it has to. When the job . . .

PANDORA

(*cutting*)

The job! Yeah . . . it better be somethin', Curt, or you're in some big trouble . . . We're both in some big trouble . . . what'd I do without you?

CURT

If anything happens, baby . . . let Art take care of things . . .

PANDORA

Art?

CURT

Yeah.

PANDORA

(*afraid*)

But I'm your woman, remember?

CURT

He's like a little brother to me. I've already spoken to him about it . . . you can get a real gig in a show or somethin' and share an apartment with him. He'll look out for you while I'm away. Go up to Frisco and wait for me . . . Art's got a head and he can look after things until I get out . . . then things will be okay again. But that's if the worst happens and we don't get the juice money . . .

PANDORA

(*struck*)

You think that much of him, Curt?

CURT

I told you he's like my brother, baby. I've been waitin' a long time for a real cat to come along . . . we're on our way way now . . .

(*lights lower; spot on the table as* SHAKY *enters*)

SHAKY

(*to* ART)

Hey, what you say your name was?

ART

(*smiling, holding out his hand*)

It's Art, Shaky, you know I met . . .

SHAKY

(*cutting*)

Yeah, I know . . . what you doin' takin' up my ole lady's time?

(BASS PLAYER *enters*)

ART

I was only sittin' here and bought her a drink. She rode over in my car with Curt and Pan.

SHAKY

That's what I mean, man . . . takin' up her time.

MAMMA

Shaky . . . stop it! He wasn't doin' nothin' . . . he's a friend of Curt's man . . .

SHAKY

SHUT UP!

MAMMA

You don't understand . . .

(*he slaps her*. ART *grabs his arm and pushes him sprawling across a chair*. SHAKY *regains his balance and begins to lunge but is caught by* CURT)

CURT

HEY, COOL IT, MAN! What's goin' on?

SHAKY

This little punk friend of yours doesn't like what I do with my woman.

BASS PLAYER

Why don't you forget it, Shaky. If it had been me I would of done the same thing. Forget it. It ain't worth it.

MAMMA

(*scared*)

He don't understand.

SHAKY

You'll see what I understand when we get home, bitch!

ART

(*putting out his hand*)

I'm sorry, man. It was my fault. I had . . .

(SHAKY *knocks* ART' *s hand aside and turns, being led toward the door by the* MUSICIAN)

SHAKY

(*to* ART)

I'll see you later.

CURT

Hey, Shaky. C'mere, man. It don't mean nothin'.

(*They exit*. PANDORA *takes a seat*. CURT *goes to the bar and answers the questions of the* MUSICIANS *and the* BARTENDER. *The show girl goes to the rear of the club and the customer orders another drink*)

MAMMA

He just don't understand . . . he can't understand and he can't give me any understanding . . .

PANDORA

Who don't understand, Mamma?

MAMMA

Shaky . . . he just don't understand . . . he should try and understand me more.

PANDORA

Girl, you so stoned you're not makin' any sense. He understands, Mamma. He understands you perfectly.

MAMMA

He can't, Pan. He can't or I wouldn't feel this way about him now.

ART

Maybe you're changin'.

PANDORA

Oh, man, you're full of it!

ART

You're cynical but not that hard, Pandora.

PANDORA

Man, I've seen it all. I don't have to be hard . . . I just use what I know.

ART

Have you seen everything, Pan?

PANDORA

Yes!

ART

Then you've seen me before?

PANDORA

(*staring*)

Yeah . . . I've seen you before. There's a you standin' on every corner with his hands in his pockets and his fly half unzipped . . . there's a you in every drunk tank in every city . . . there's a you sniffin' around moochin' drinks and kissin' ass and thinkin' he's a make-out artist. Yeah . . . I've seen you before, punk!

MAMMA

He just don't understand . . .

ART

No, you've never seen me before, Pandora. I'm goin'a tell you something.

PANDORA

(*sarcastic*)

What are you goin'a tell me, Art?

ART

That I'm goin'a change your life.

PANDORA

WHAT!!!

(*Lights go up with a startling flash*. DEENY *and the bouncer*, PETE, *enter*. DEENY, *in black glasses, sports an ascot and a cummerbund under his sport coat. In the thin dress she entered in, the show girl walks from the rear and takes a seat beside the customer*. MAMMA TOO TIGHT *stands and* CURT *nearly bowls over a customer on his way to meet* DEENY *in center stage in front of* PANDORA' *s table*. PANDORA *jumps to her feet beside* MAMMA, *followed by* ART)

CURT

Deeny!

(*The* BASS PLAYER *enters, and the* DRUMMER *and* PIANO PLAYER *hurry over. Behind the bar the* BARTENDER *stands tensed; the* BASS PLAYER *climbs upon the stage and begins zippering his bass fiddle into its cloth bag*)

DEENY

Keep it, Curt! I don't want to hear it. I just came from the union and I've taken all the crap I'm gonna . . . the show's closed.

(*chorus of yells*)

CURT

Deeny, what you take us for?

PANDORA

Hey, man . . . let's go in the back and talk . . .

DRUMMER

(pushing his way around the PIANO PLAYER *)*

Yeah, Deeny, I want to talk to you!

DEENY

I just don't want to hear it from any of you. OKAY? . . . OKAY? Now everybody . . . this club is closin'. Ya hear? Everybody out inside of ten minutes . . . understand? This is my property. Get off it inside of ten minutes or I'm callin' the cops . . . your things and you out . . . hit the street . . . that means everybody!

(another chorus of yells from nearly everyone. The customers hurry out the exit and the show girl joins the group)

BASS PLAYER

(to other MUSICIANS))

Hey, fellas, I'm splittin' . . . what about you?

(MAMMA *turns and goes over to him*)

DRUMMER

Man, what about my pay?

DEENY

Take your bitchin' to the union, fellah. They instigated this hassle.

PANDORA

We don't know nothin' bout no union, Deeny . . .

DEENY

(sarcastic)

I know you don't, sugar. But you girls should get organized . . . try to get paid hourly and get off the quota system and you'd . . .

CURT

Watch your mouth, mathafukker!

BOUNCER

You'd better watch yours!

DEENY

(*to* BARTENDER)

HEY, CHICO, CALL THE COPS! YOU JUST CAN'T REASON WITH SOME JERKS! CALL THEM NOW!

(*the* BARTENDER *dials*)

PANDORA

(*to* CURT)

What we gonna do, baby? . . .

CURT

Quiet!

PANDORA

But your case, honey . . .

BARTENDER

(on phone)

Yeah . . . there's trouble at The Strip Club on Western . . . yeah . . .

(DEENY *tries to push his way past but* CURT *blocks him. The* BOUNCER *moves to shove* CURT *out of the way but* ART *steps in as the four confront each other, and the girls back off. The* PIANO PLAYER *has coaxed the* DRUMMER *to join the* BASS PLAYER *upon the stage, packing away his equipment. At a run, the show girl rushes to the rear of the club as the* BARTENDER *hangs up the phone. As the other* MUSICIANS *pack up, the* PIANO PLAYER *comes back to the group*)

PIANO PLAYER

Deeny, you just can't do this. This ain't right about us. We stuck by you for below scale wages, riskin' our own needs with the union to keep you in business, until you got on your feet. And still we never got paid on time. Now I hear you gonna put some names in here and clean up on the rep we made for you.

BOUNCER

Shut up, mister. You're not supposed to be here right now, remember?

PANDORA

(furious)

You owe me for two and a half weeks, man!

DEENY

(trying to get by again)

Sorry, baby. Come around some time and maybe we can work out somethin'.

CURT

I know why you doin' this, Deeny. Don't pull that union shit on me! You want all the girls to work for you . . . on the block like tramps for ten and fifteen dollars a trick. Pan, Mamma and all the other broads. I'd die before I'd let you put my woman on the street for ten tricks a day. Why you got to be so fuckin' greedy, man? You ain't right! You already got six girls now.

BOUNCER

Just say he has taste and discrimination, Curt. You know he wants your old lady because . . .

DEENY

(cutting)

Shut up all of you! And are you goin' to get out of my way?

MAMMA

(from bandstand)

Deeny. Who you think you are?

DEENY

(*to* MAMMA)

You know who I am, you stupid country cunt. And if you want to stay on the streets and keep that junkie ole man of yours cool, just keep your mouth out of this! That way you won't get your legs broke and . . .

CURT

(cutting)

I know why you doin' this, Deeny.

(SHAKY *enters. The show girl rushes from the rear with costumes in arms and exits, speaking to no one*)

SHAKY

Did I hear somebody say they gonna break Mamma's legs?

(there is general bedlam with shouts and near screaming)

DRUMMER

(exiting)

I'm goin' ta take this farther than to the union, Deeny!

BOUNCER

You can take it to your mother, punk!

(DRUMMER *drops equipment and lunges toward* BOUNCER *but* PIANO PLAYER *grabs him and holds.* BASS PLAYER *helps*)

BASS PLAYER

(*exiting with* DRUMMER)

Hey Deeny, you're wrong! You're dead wrong, man!

PIANO PLAYER

(*to* CURT *and* PANDORA)

Cool it. Let's all split. This ain't nothin' but a big bust.

(*it becomes suddenly quiet and the* BARTENDER, *a club in hand, comes around the bar and stands*

behind CURT *and* ART. SHAKY *stands to the side of* DEENY *and the* BOUNCER. MAMMA *is on the bandstand, wide-eyed, and* PANDORA *is downstage glowering at her enemies. Leaving*)

I'll see you guys.

(*seeing* SHAKY)

Hey, man. It ain't worth it.

SHAKY

I'll get in touch with you, okay?

PIANO PLAYER

C'mon, man. I don't like what I see.

SHAKY

Make it! Be a good friend and make it.

(PIANO PLAYER *exits. It is even more quiet. Very low, from somewhere outside, the theme is heard as each group eyes the other and tenses*)

PANDORA

(spitting it out, violent as unsuspected spit splattering a face)

Fuck you, Deeny! Fuck you! Fuck you! FUCK YOU!

DEENY

(frenzied)

YOU LITTLE TRAMPY BITCH . . . YOU . . .

(CURT *smashes him in the mouth as he reaches for* PANDORA. DEENY *falls back beside the table, grabs a glass and hurls it into* CURT' *s face, shattering it.* CURT *launches himself upon him and pummels* DEENY *to the floor*.

Meanwhile, the BOUNCER *and* ART *fight in center stage.* SHAKY *is struck almost immediately from behind by the* BARTENDER' *s club.* ART, *seeing the* BARTENDER *advancing on* CURT' *s rear, breaks away and desperately kicks out at the* BARTENDER. *With a screech he doubles over and grabs his groin. The* BOUNCER *seizes* ART *from behind, about the throat, in an armlock, and begins strangling him.* PANDORA, *who has taken off her shoes after kicking* DEENY *several times as* CURT *beats him upon the floor, attacks the* BOUNCER *from behind and repeatedly strikes him about the head with her shoe heels. The* BOUNCER *loosens his grip on* ART *and grabs* PANDORA *and punches her. She falls.* ART, *gasping, reaches down for the* BARTENDER' *s dropped club, picks it up and turns and beats the* BOUNCER *to the floor*.

All the while MAMMA TOO TIGHT *screams*.

With face bloodied from splintered glass, CURT *has beaten* DEENY *into unconsciousness and staggers over and pulls* PANDORA *up*.

Sirens, screeches and slamming car doors are heard from outside. Shouts)

CURT

(*towing* PANDORA)

C'mon, Art! Pull yourself together. The cops are here.

(ART *staggers over to* SHAKY *and tries to lift him but he is too weak.* MAMMA, *crying and screaming, jumps from the bandstand and pulls at* SHAKY. *Heading for the rear*)

He's too heavy, Art. Leave him. Grab Mamma and let's get out the back way. MOVE! C'MON, MAN, MOVE!

(*dazed, but following orders*, ART *grabs* MAMMA' *s arm and struggles with her*)

MAMMA

(resisting)

NO! NO! I CAN'T LEAVE HIM LIKE THAT!

CURT

(exiting)

Bring her, Art. Out the back way to the car.

MAMMA

(*being dragged out by* ART)

My first day out . . . my first day . . .

(They exit and immediately the stage blackens, then the tumble of running feet, then)

VOICE

CHRIST!

(more heavy running, then stop)

Hey, call a couple of ambulances . . . Emergency!

(Curtain)

Act 3

Act 3, Scene 1

TIME *three days later. Afternoon*

SCENE CURT' *s apartment. He and* RICH *play chess as in act one. The bed is lowered and* MAMMA TOO TIGHT *sleeps with the covers pulled up to her chin as if she is cold. The radio is off and the California sunshine glistens in the clean room. The room looks sterile, unlived in and motel-like without the lighting of the first act.*

CURT *wears two band-aids upon his face, one upon his forehead, the other on the bridge of his nose.*

CURT

(bored)

It'll be mate in two moves, Rich. Do you want to play it out?

RICH

Nawh, man. I ain't up to it.

CURT

(sitting back)

The last three days have just taken everything out of me, man.

RICH

Yeah. They been pretty rough.

(CURT *stands, stretches and walks across the stage*)

Hey, man. Is there any more beer?

CURT

Nawh. Pan and Art's bringing some in with them when they come.

RICH

(muttering)

Yeah . . . when they get here.

CURT

(*noticing* RICH' *s tone*)

What did you say, man?

RICH

Oh, Nothin', man.

CURT

(sharply)

You're a liar . . . I heard what you said!

RICH

(sullen)

I ain't goin'a be many more of them liars, Curt.

CURT

(gesturing)

Awww, man. Forget it. . . you know how I feel with Deeny in a coma from his concussion for the past three days and me not knowin' if he's goin' ta press charges finally or die.

RICH

Yeah, man. I'm a bit edgy myself. Forget about what I said.

(CURT *returns to the couch and sprawls back*)

CURT

But I'd like to know what you meant by it, Rich.

RICH

(seeing no way out)

Now, Curt. You and I been friends since were young punks stealin' hub caps and tires together, right? Remember that time you, me and the guys gang banged that Pechuco broad?. . . And the Dog Town boys came up and we had that big rumble and they killed Sparky?

CURT

(*sensing something coming*)

How can I forget it . . . I served my first stretch behind it for stabbin' that Mexican kid, Manuel.

RICH

Yeah. That was a good time ago and Manuel ain't no kid no more . . . he got killed in Korea.

CURT

Yeah. But, tell me. What do you have to say, good buddy?

RICH

(*pausing, then serious*)

It's about this guy Art and Pandora, man.

CURT

What do you mean, man?

RICH

Man . . . I don't mean there's anything goin' on yet . . . but each afternoon he's taken Pandora out for the past three days they been gettin' back later . . . and . . .

CURT

And what, Rich!

RICH

And the way she looks at him, Curt.

CURT

(*disgusted and angry*)

Awww, man . . . I thought I knew you better.

RICH

Well I told you that I didn't think that they were doin' anything really.

CURT

But, what? That he drives her up to Sunset Strip to keep her dates with the big tricks . . . you know how much dough she brings back, man?

RICH

(*resolutely*)

Yeah, man. Sometimes over a hundred dollars for one trick.

CURT

So you can't hurry those people for that kinda bread, man.

RICH

(*trying to be understood*)

But I wasn't talkin' about the tricks, Curt. I don't think they're holdin' back any money on you.

CURT

Then what are you talkin' 'bout?

RICH

About that little jive-ass square gettin' next to your woman, that's what!

CURT

Now listen, Rich. We're friends and all that but that little jive-ass square as you call him is just like a brother to me . . . and we been in some tighter things than you and me will ever be in.

RICH

(*obviously hurt*)

Well, forget it!

CURT

No, let's not forget it. You're accusing my wife of jivin' around on me. You know that Pan's the straightest broad you'll ever find. That's why I married her. You know if we couldn't have gotten another man that she would have gone on the job and been as good as most men. She and I are a team. What could she gain by messin' 'round on me with my ace buddy?

RICH

Forget it, I said.

CURT

Nawh, Rich. I don't want to. I know what's really buggin' you. Ever since Shaky got busted at the Club and they found all that smack on him you been buggin' Mamma to be your woman 'cause you know that with Shaky's record he won't be hittin' the streets again for at least ten years. But you're wrong on two counts 'cause we're bailin' out Shaky tonight and takin' him with us and Mamma don't want you 'cause she wants Art but he don't go for her.

RICH

(*getting to his feet*)

I'll see you, man. Between your broad and that cat you can't think any more!

(CURT *reaches for* RICH' *s shirt front*; RICH *throws his hands off*)

Take it easy, Curt. You already won a close one this week. And your guardian angel ain't around to sneak punch people.

(CURT *stares at him and steps back*)

MAMMA

(*from bag*)

Hey, what's all that shoutin' about?

CURT

Nothin', baby. Rich and I are just crackin' jokes.

MAMMA

(*sitting up*)

Curt, I wonder if . . .

CURT

No, Mamma. You can't have no fix. Remember what I told you? You don't turn no tricks in town 'cause you're hot behind Shaky's bust so you don't need any heroin, right? You're on holiday and besides, you're full of codein now . . . that's enough . . .

MAMMA

But I would be good if I could get some. I wouldn't worry about Shaky so much and I'd feel . . .

CURT

You just come out of the joint clean, Mamma. You don't need anything but to keep cool.

MAMMA

(*pouting*)

But I got the sixteen hundred dollars that Shaky had stashed at our pad. I could buy it okay, Curt.

CURT

Forget it. That money is with the other broad. We all takin' a trip with that. Besides . . . Shaky had over two thousand bucks worth of stuff in the pad and we sellin' it tonight so we can bail him out so he can leave with us . . .

(MAMMA *jumps out of bed in a thin gown*)

MAMMA

(*delighted*)

You are? Then he'll be home soon?

CURT

Yeah. Then we all make it before Deeny comes out his coma or croaks. Now get back in bed before Rich grabs you!

MAMMA

(*playful*)

Rich, you better not. Shaky will be home soon.

RICH

(*teasing*)

Sheet, woman. I don't care about old ass Shaky. C'mon, baby, why don't you get yourself a young stud?

MAMMA

(*getting in bed*)

When I get one it won't be you.

RICH

(*serious*)

Then who?

CURT

(*mutters*)

I told Art and Pan that we need the car this evening to drop off the stuff. After that it'll be time to get ready for the job.

RICH

(*bitterly, to* MAMMA)

So he's got to you, too.

MAMMA

Nobody's got to me. What'chou talkin' 'bout, Rich? Art's been stayin' over to Shaky and my place for the last couple of nights while I stayed here. How can he get . . .

RICH

(*cutting*)

How did you know I was talkin' about Art?

MAMMA

'Cause you got Art on the brain, that's why!

CURT

I thought we dropped that, Rich.

RICH

(*to* MAMMA)

If you're goin'a get somebody young . . . get a man . . . not some little book readin' faggot . . .

MAMMA

(*red faced, to* RICH)

Oh, go fuck yourself, man!

(*she covers her head*)

RICH

Okay, man. We got a lot to do tonight, so I'll lay off.

(*Through the back curtain the outside kitchen door can be seen opening. Dusk is come and* ART *enters first with a large bag*. PANDORA *follows, closes the door and purposely bumps against him as she passes. She wears dark glasses, her pants and boots*)

ART

Hey, you almost made me drop this! Where should I put it?

(PANDORA *enters front room smiling*)

PANDORA

Hi, honey. Hello, Rich.

(*She walks over to* CURT, *kisses him and places money in his hand*)

CURT

Hey, pretty baby.

(*he pulls her to him, gives her an extended kiss and breaks it, looking over* PANDORA' *s shoulders at* RICH *who looks away*)

Everything okay?

PANDORA

Smooth as Silky Sullivan.

(*In the kitchen* ART *is taking items from the bag*. CURT *hands back the money to* PANDORA)

CURT

Here, Pan, put this in the box with the rest.

PANDORA

Okay.

(*she walks past bed and looks down*)

What's wrong with Mamma?

CURT

Rich's been tryin' to love her up.

RICH

She won't go for my program, baby.

PANDORA

(*entering the kitchen*)

That's too bad . . . you better cultivate some charm, Rich.

RICH

Yeah, that's what's happen'n. I'm not one of the lucky ones . . . some people don't need it.

PANDORA

(*going to* ART)

Let me take in the beer, Art. You put the frozen food in the refrigerator and the canned things in the cupboard.) ART *pulls her to him and kisses her. Taking breath*) Hand me the glasses, will ya?

(*they kiss again, she responding this time, then she pushes him away and begins fixing beer for* CURT *and* RICH)

CURT

Hey, Mamma. You want any beer?

MAMMA

(*under the cover*)

No, no.

(PANDORA *serves* CURT *and* RICH *then climbs the stairs and enters the dressing room*. ART *comes out of the kitchen*)

RICH

How you feel, Art?

ART

Okay. Hollywood's an interesting place. First job I ever had just drivin' somebody around.

CURT

Hope it's your last, Art. With this job tonight and my cut from sellin' Shaky's heroin we'll be just about in. Might even go into business back East.

ART

Yeah? I hope so.

CURT

We already got almost twenty-four hundred with Shaky's money we found at his place and the bread we've

been able to hustle the last few days. After tonight we'll be set.

RICH

Yeah. After tonight you'll be set.

CURT

(*looking at* RICH)

It's too bad you won't come with us, Rich. But your share will fix you up out here okay.

RICH

Fix me up? Ha ha . . . I'll probably shoot that up in smack inside of several months . . . but if I make it I'll probably be lookin' you up in two more years when my probation's up. No use ruin'n a good thing. When I cut this town loose I want to be clean. I just hope all goes well with you.

ART

(smiling)

Why shouldn't it?

CURT

Yeah, Rich, why shouldn't it?

RICH

Funny things happen to funny-style people, ya know.

CURT

Yeah. Too bad you won't be comin' along . . . we need a clown in our show.

(RICH *watches* ART *studying the chess game*)

RICH

Do you see anything I missed, good buddy?

ART

Oh, I don't know.

RICH

You know I seldom beat Curt. Why don't you play him?

ART

(still looking at board)

Maybe I will when we find time.

CURT

What would you have done from there, Art?

ART

It's according to what side I'm on.

CURT

You have the black. White's going to mate you in two moves.

ART

He is?

RICH

Yeah. He is.

(ART *reaches over and picks up the black king*)

ART

Most kings need a queen to be most powerful but others do the best they can.

(he places the king upon another square)

That's what I'd do, Rich.

CURT

(perceiving)

Yeah. I see . . . I see . . .

RICH

Say, why'd you move there? . . . He can't move now . . . he can't put himself in check.

ART

(*as* RICH *stares at him*)

Yeah, Rich?

CURT

(matter-of-factly)

A stalemate.

RICH

(muttering)

I should of seen that.

(*to* ART)

How did you . . . why . . .

ART

When you play the game you look for any break you can make.

CURT

We should play sometime, Art.

ART

I'm looking forward to it, Curt. But you name the time.

CURT

(standing)

I'll do that. HEY, PANDORA! We got to go!

(PANDORA *comes to the top of the stairs. She has changed into a simple dress*)

PANDORA

We goin' some place?

CURT

I got to drop Shaky's stuff off and go down to the bail bondsman and the lawyer. I want you to drive. C'mon, Rich. Pan will sit in the car down the street in the next block and you and me will walk up the street talkin' about baseball, understand? On the corner of Adams and Crenshaw we'll meet a man and hit a grand slam.

RICH

Yeah, I hope so, brother.

CURT

It's trip time from here on in, baby.

PANDORA

(excited)

Wait until I get my coat.

CURT

(in good humor)

Let's go, woman. It's eighty degrees outside and we might be the hottest thing in L˙A˙ but it just ain't that

warm. Let's go, now. See you, Art.

(*going to* ART)

Oh, I almost forgot the car keys.

ART

(handing him the keys)

See you guys.

CURT

(*hands keys to* PANDORA)

You'll watch the phone, okay?

ART

Sure, good buddy, I'll see to the phone.

CURT

If Mamma wakes up and wants a fix don't give in to her.

ART

I'll try not to.

CURT

(serious)

I mean it, Art.

ART

(smiling)

I'm dead serious, man.

PANDORA

See you later, Art.

ART

See you later, Pan. Good-bye, Curt. Good-bye, Rich.

(*The trio exit and* ART *goes to the radio and switches it on. It plays the theme as he enters the kitchen and gets himself a beer. He comes from the kitchen drinking from the bottle and climbs the bathroom stairs. His shadow is seen lifting and then dialing. His voice is muffled by the music and by his whisper; nothing is understood*.

After the shadow hangs up, ART *returns to the living room and descends the stairs. He sits upon the bed and shakes* MAMMA TOO TIGHT)

MAMMA

(being shaken)

Huh! I don't want any beer.

(ART *shakes her once more. She uncovers her head*)

Oh, Art. It's you. Where's everybody?

(he doesn't answer, looks at her. Evening comes and the room blackens)

I'm glad you woke me. I always like to talk to you but I guess I bug you since you don't say too much to me. Why ain't you sayin' nothin' now?

(three beat pause)

ART

(laughing)

Ha ha ha . . . ha ha . . . Mama Too Tight! . . . ha ha ha . . .

MAMMA

You said it! Sometimes you have such a nice look on your face and now . . . you look different . . .

(pause)

. . . like you so happy you could scream . . . You never looked at me like this before, Art, never.

(in total blackness as the music plays)

You said Shaky wouldn't be back? . . . He won't? . . . I don't care as long as you don't go away . . . You know . . . you understand me. It's like you can look inside my head . . . Oh how did you know? Just a little bit? More? You say I can have a fix anytime I want? . . . Oh! . . . you understand me, don't cha? Don't let Curt know . . . you say don't worry about Curt . . . don't care what anybody thinks or says except you? . . .

(silence, pause)

Oh I feel so good now . . . I didn't know but I was hoping . . . I didn't know, honey . . . OH ART! . . . Ahhhh . . . now I can feel you oozing out of me . . . and I'm glad so glad . . . it's good . . .

Act 3, Scene 2

PANDORA *leans against the kitchen door as the lights go up. The atmosphere of the first act is recreated by the lights and music. The bed has been put up and* ART *sits upon the couch*. PANDORA *has been crying and what can be seen of her face around her dark glasses appears shocked. She walks to the center of the room and faces* ART)

PANDORA

Art . . . Art . . . they got them. They got Curt and Rich . . . with all that stuff on them. The cops were waitin' on them. They busted them with all those narcotics . . . we'll never see them again.

ART

(rising)

We're hot, Pandora. We got to get out of town.

PANDORA

They got 'em, don't you hear me, Art? What can we do?

ART

Nothin' . . . we got to make it before Curt or Rich break and the cops are kickin' that door in.

PANDORA

You said nothin'? But we . . . what do you mean? We got to do somethin'!

(crying)

We can't just let it happen to them . . . we got to do somethin' like Curt would do if it was one of us . . . Art! Art! DON'T JUST STAND THERE!

(he slaps her viciously, knocking off her glasses, exposing her blackened eyes)

ART

(commanding)

Get a hold of yourself, Pandora. You've had a bad experience.

(she holds her face and looks dazed)

Now listen to me. Mamma has gone over to her place to pack and as soon as she gets back we're all leaving.

PANDORA

(dazed)

Mamma is packin'? . . . Did Curt tell her to pack

ART

You know he didn't. Now as soon as she gets here I want us to be packed, okay?

PANDORA

But . . . Art . . . packed . . . where we goin'?

ART

To Buffalo, baby. Where else?

PANDORA

To Buffalo?

ART

That's what I said. Now go up in your dressing room and get your case.

(a knock comes from the front door)

That's Mamma already . . . we're runnin' late, woman. C'mon, get a move on.

(he shoves her)

MOVE! GET A MOVE ON, PANDORA!

(she stumbles over the first step, catches her balance and begins climbing. ART *looks after her)*

Oh . . . Pandora . . .

(she turns and looks vacantly at him)

. . . Don't forget your box!

(as she turns and climbs the last steps, ART *saunters to the radio as the knock sounds again. Instantaneously, as he switches the radio off, the stage is thrown in complete blackness)*

Act 3, Scene 2

PANDORA *leans against the kitchen door as the lights go up. The atmosphere of the first act is recreated by the lights and music. The bed has been put up and* ART *sits upon the couch*. PANDORA *has been crying and what can be seen of her face around her dark glasses appears shocked. She walks to the center of the room and faces* ART)

PANDORA

Art . . . Art . . . they got them. They got Curt and Rich . . . with all that stuff on them. The cops were waitin' on them. They busted them with all those narcotics . . . we'll never see them again.

ART

(rising)

We're hot, Pandora. We got to get out of town.

PANDORA

They got 'em, don't you hear me, Art? What can we do?

ART

Nothin' . . . we got to make it before Curt or Rich break and the cops are kickin' that door in.

PANDORA

You said nothin'? But we . . . what do you mean? We got to do somethin'!

(crying)

We can't just let it happen to them . . . we got to do somethin' like Curt would do if it was one of us . . . Art! Art! DON'T JUST STAND THERE!

(he slaps her viciously, knocking off her glasses, exposing her blackened eyes)

ART

(commanding)

Get a hold of yourself, Pandora. You've had a bad experience.

(she holds her face and looks dazed)

Now listen to me. Mamma has gone over to her place to pack and as soon as she gets back we're all leaving.

PANDORA

(dazed)

Mamma is packin'? . . . Did Curt tell her to pack

ART

You know he didn't. Now as soon as she gets here I want us to be packed, okay?

PANDORA

But . . . Art . . . packed . . . where we goin'?

ART

To Buffalo, baby. Where else?

PANDORA

To Buffalo?

ART

That's what I said. Now go up in your dressing room and get your case.

(a knock comes from the front door)

That's Mamma already . . . we're runnin' late, woman. C'mon, get a move on.

(he shoves her)

MOVE! GET A MOVE ON, PANDORA!

(she stumbles over the first step, catches her balance and begins climbing. ART *looks after her)*

Oh . . . Pandora . . .

(she turns and looks vacantly at him)

. . . Don't forget your box!

(as she turns and climbs the last steps, ART *saunters to the radio as the knock sounds again. Instantaneously, as he switches the radio off, the stage is thrown in complete blackness)*